Disney · PIXAR
The Art of
COCO
Foreword by John Lasseter
Introductions by Lee Unkrich & Adrian Molina

Sharon Calahan Digital

Disney · PIXAR

The Art of COCO

Foreword by John Lasseter

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CHRONICLE BOOKS
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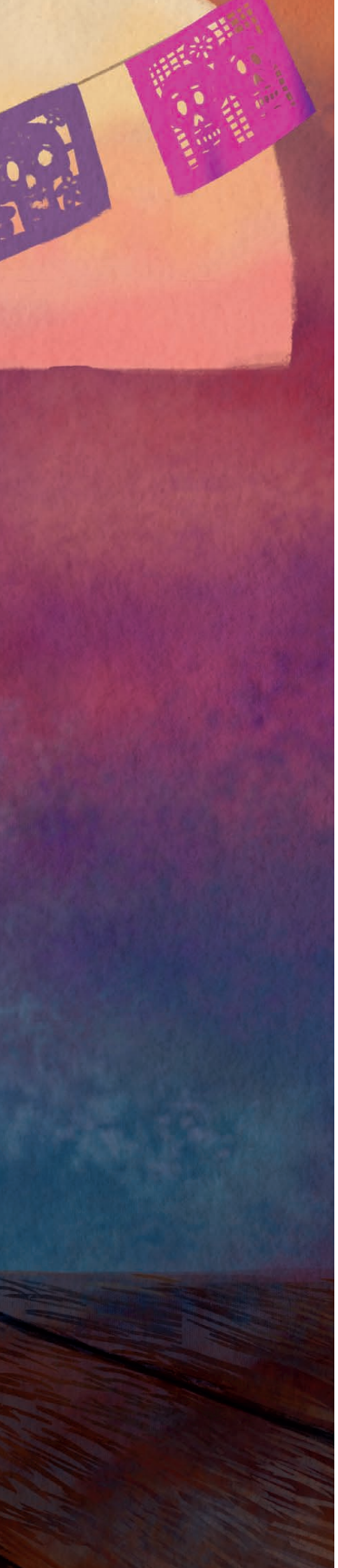
Travis Ruiz Digital



FOREWORD

John Lasseter, Chief Creative Officer

When Lee Unkrich first pitched the idea for the film that would become *Coco,* I was immediately excited by the possibilities of doing an animated film centered on the vibrant celebration of Día de los Muertos.

Many cultures around the world have special occasions when families honor the memory of relatives who have passed away. Holidays of remembrance are often somber and quiet in tone, but on Día de los Muertos, which is observed in Mexico and in many other countries, those who have passed away are remembered with exuberance and happiness. It is a tradition filled with color, art, music, food, and memories.

Lee, *Coco*'s producer Darla Anderson, and their fantastic team of filmmakers, led by co-director and writer Adrian Molina and production designer Harley Jessup, made multiple trips to Mexico to witness how the traditions of Día de los Muertos are observed and passed on. They visited big cities and tiny villages, experienced parades in the streets and candlelit vigils in the cemeteries. They were invited to stay with families and share in their celebrations. The world of this film—both Miguel's village of Santa Cecilia and the spectacular Land of the Dead—is filled with the details and emotions of those visits. It was incredibly important to the *Coco* team to create an environment and a story that was not only vivid and beautiful, but also respectful of and true to the traditions of the people and the holiday.

In the course of this journey I've grown to appreciate the meaning of these traditions on a personal level. In the past few years I have lost both my mother and father—my brother passed away almost twenty years ago—and my wife Nancy lost her father recently as well. As I learned more and more about Día de los Muertos through the making of *Coco,* I was inspired by this practice of active and joyful remembrance. In our home last November, Nancy and I put up pictures of our loved ones and set out offerings of the favorite food and drinks for each person. It got us remembering them in a really wonderful way, telling stories and laughing as we shared memories we hadn't thought about in years. It was such a moving experience that we resolved to do it every year, to help connect our children and eventually our grandchildren with the ancestors who have helped make them who they are.

A story rooted in Mexican tradition, *Coco,* with its themes of music, family, and the power of remembrance, was made to resonate with the world. We hope it can inspire families all over the world to take a moment to remember their ancestors with joy and gratitude.

Zaruhi Galstyan Digital

INTRODUCTION

Lee Unkrich, Director

I'm convinced that the most powerful stories must come from someplace personal. The more universal the idea, the more likely it will resonate with people around the world.

And what is more universal than family?

For better or worse, we all come from families—some big, some small. And those families all stretch back in time for countless generations. Despite that, we typically only get to know a handful of our family members, and we're lucky if we get to hear stories about a handful more who lived their lives before we were born. But what of the people in our families who lived long ago, whose stories are no longer told? As time marches forward, our distant ancestors' memories threaten to evaporate into the ether.

Mexico is one of many cultures in the world that ritualize the remembrance of loved ones who have passed on. But their annual celebration of Día de los Muertos is unique in its joyful celebration filled with color, music, festivities, and life. Most people are aware of the iconography of Día de los Muertos: the colorful sugar skulls, the Victorian skeletons, and the beautifully intricate face paint. But most folks outside the Mexican culture are not aware that the core of the celebration, its very reason for being, is to actively remember those who came before us. It's imperative to pass along their stories in order to keep their memories alive.

It was this notion that made me realize the potential for telling an emotionally resonant story set against Día de los Muertos, and *Coco* is the end result of the multi year journey I went on with my phenomenal crew.

The artwork you'll see in this book was directly inspired by the many research trips we went on throughout Mexico. It's also the result of the fertile imagination and dizzying skill of a small and very talented team of artists and designers who passionately brought the world and characters of *Coco* to life.

Coco would not exist without the beauty and inspiration of Mexico and its culture, as well as the many families who opened up their homes and lives to us. We're forever grateful to them.

We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. I hope *Coco* inspires people around the world to joyfully celebrate their memories and to share their stories with the next generation.

INTRODUCTION

Adrian Molina, Co-Director, Screenwriter

Coco became a part of my life back in 2013, when I first heard Lee give his pitch for a Pixar film about a young kid from a Mexican family who—in pursuit of an artistic dream—takes a life-changing journey on Día de los Muertos.

As for *this* young kid from a Mexican family, who grew up enamored of Disney films from the moment he could sit up, this film has been *my* life-changing journey.

I've always loved animation for its ability to make real the things you can only imagine: sparkling worlds, impossible characters, magic. And Miguel's story calls for so much imaginative imagery. How do you design a land of skeletons? What does it look like to visualize a family's blessing? How do you show a death beyond death? These are the challenges the artists at Pixar thrive on, and they attacked each one with imagination and passion.

But as fantastic as the Land of the Dead is, the art of *Coco* finds its foundation in the beauty of the place and culture it comes from. There's an artistry in every aspect of daily life in the Mexican towns that inspired Santa Cecilia—the clothing, the food, the architecture, the music (the list goes on . . .). Miguel's family's business is like any number of small operations you might find in the towns we visited in our research.

The *ofrenda* where the Riveras honor their family, the trails of marigolds that guide beloved souls home, the candlelit cemeteries . . . These are not things of fantasy but icons of a real and beautiful tradition. Working with such talented artists and collaborators to reflect these customs and my heritage has made this the most personal and most meaningful project I've ever been a part of.

Seeing the story develop, I found myself wandering through memories of dinners in my grandparents' courtyard in Jalisco . . . reliving birthday parties filled with aunts and uncles and cousins belting out "Las Mañanitas . . ." remembering sitting quietly listening to my dad play his guitar, my mother humming along. Each scene is a reliving of the joys, the laughter, the struggles, and the love that I felt growing up—every frame a celebration of family.

With this art, we invite you to join in that celebration with us.

Ana Ramírez Gouache

Harley Jessup, Bryn Imagire, Kelly LaMar Photographs

THE LAND OF THE LIVING

Many of us who were drawn to work on this film were people who already had a deep love for Mexico. Mexico is an incredibly gorgeous and diverse country, and it was very important for us to do justice to its rich, complex history and culture. We were fortunate enough to go on multiple research trips to visit cities and villages all around the country. Everywhere we went, people were unbelievably welcoming, generous, and warm. In particular, it was very inspiring to visit the small villages, where they still practice traditional rites of Día de los Muertos that even many of our Mexican friends from Mexico City had never seen before.

DARLA K. ANDERSON
Producer

MIGUEL

Whenever you see a character's story onscreen, the impulse is to relate to them, to put yourself in their shoes, to feel their emotions. But I think there's a particular power when you actually recognize yourself onscreen. Growing up, there weren't really any animated movies where I saw myself in the protagonist. As we began circling round a design for Miguel, I remember Zaruhi Galstyan did this beautiful sketch—a scrawny Mexican kid holding a guitar, crooked smile, a spark of passion in his eyes—and looking at it, I thought of the kids who would see this character and think, "Hey, this is a story about someone like me. I'm someone whose story is worth telling, whose experience is worth hearing about."

ADRIAN MOLINA
Co-Director, Screenwriter

Tom Gately China marker / Pencil / Digital

Zaruhi Galstyan Digital

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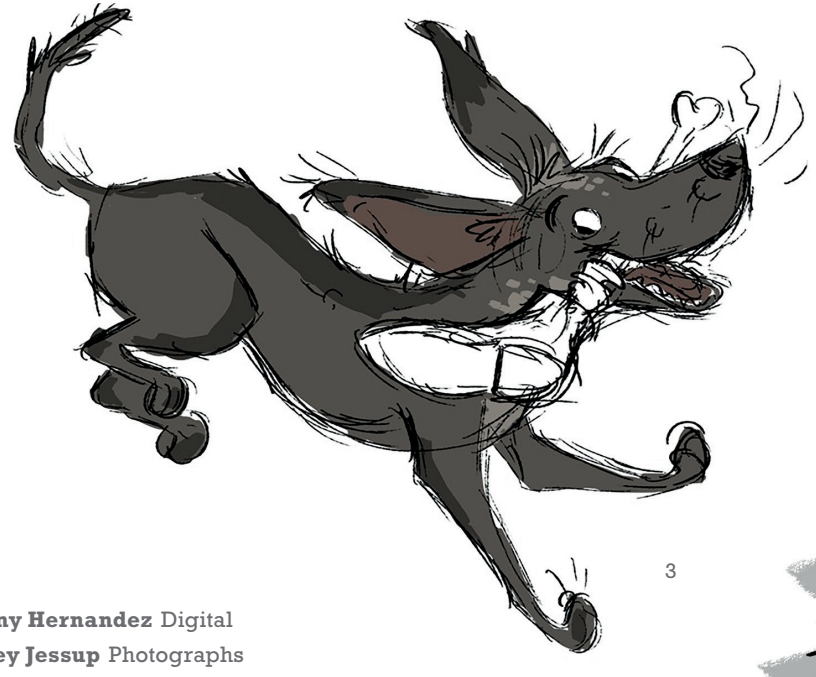

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1–4 Manny Hernandez Digital
5–6 Harley Jessup Photographs
7–8 Manny Hernandez Digital

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DANTE

The Xoloitzcuintli, or Xolo dog, is the national dog of Mexico. They have a long, rich history going back thousands of years. Xolos have a very distinctive appearance; they are one of the few dog breeds in the world that are nearly hairless. When we learned that the ancient Aztecs believed Xolo dogs guided the dead on their journey to the afterlife, we knew we had to have a Xolo be part of our story.

LEE UNKRICH
Director

THE RIVERA FAMILY

I always feel that in order to design characters that people relate to, you have to draw from something true. Especially with the living Rivera family, I keyed into particular people I know—not necessarily my own family—to try to make these characters as appealing as possible and also as authentic as possible.

DANIEL ARRIAGA
Character Art Director

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1 **Zaruhi Galstyan** Digital
2 **Greg Dykstra** Clay
3 **Daniel Arriaga** Pen
4 **Manny Hernandez** Pencil

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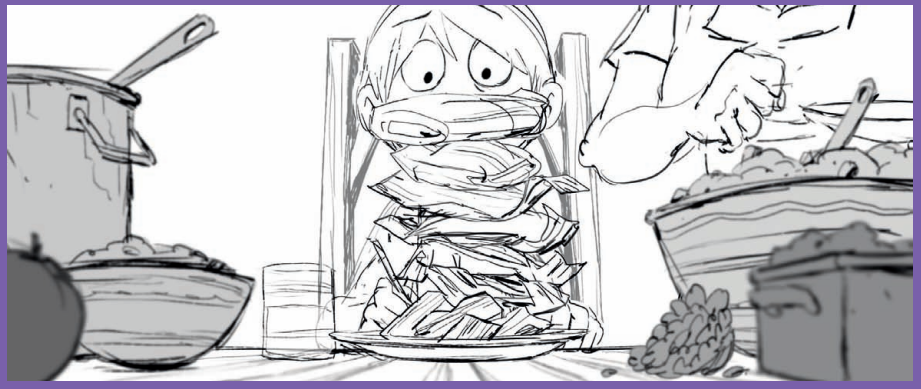

Rosana Sullivan, Manny Hernandez, Adrian Molina, Dean Kelly Digital

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MAMÁ COCO

1 **Daniel Arriaga** Pencil
2 **Daisuke Tsutsumi** Digital
3 **Zaruhi Galstyan** Pencil
4 **Greg Dykstra** Clay

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ABUELITA

1 Daniel Arriaga Pencil / Digital **2 Dean Kelly, Xavier Riffault** Digital
3 Bryn Imagire Digital **4 Greg Dykstra** Clay

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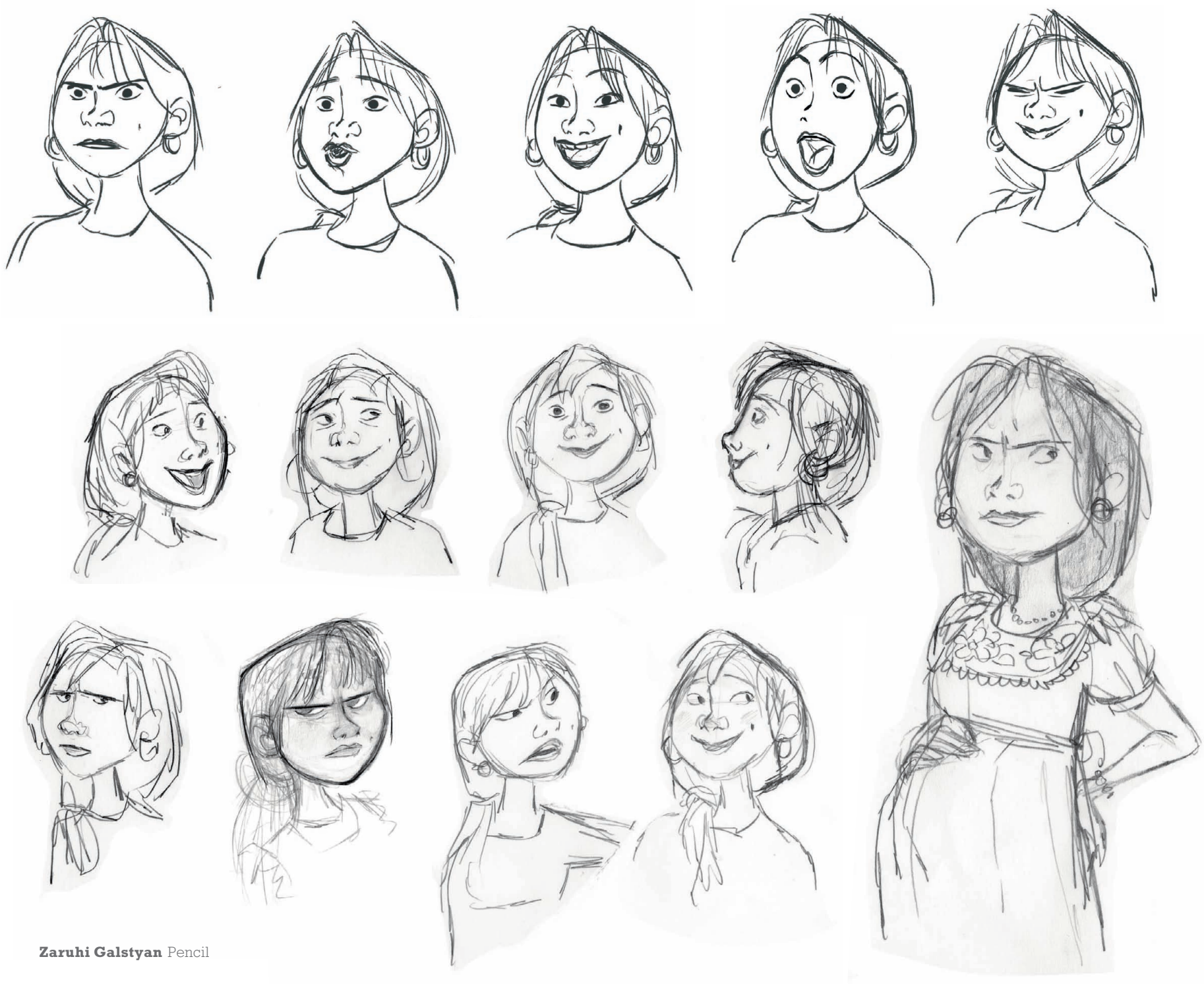
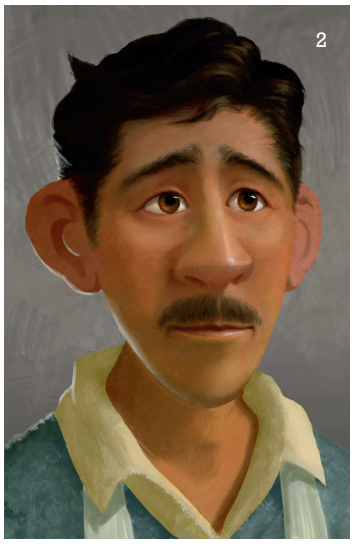


Zaruhi Galstyan Pencil



PAPÁ AND MAMÁ

1 **Greg Dykstra, Daniel Arriaga** Clay / Digital
2 **Shelly Wan** Digital
3–4 **Greg Dykstra** Clay
5 **Shelly Wan** Digital
6 **Daniel Arriaga** Pencil

Daniel Arriaga Pencil

Jason Katz Pencil / Watercolor

SANTA CECILIA COMMUNITY

As a first-generation kid whose parents emigrated from Mexico, I knew we had to be spot-on with our animation in this film, or I would hear it from my family. So a big thing for me was being faithful to the sort of body language you see in Mexico. There's a lot of closeness, hugging, that type of caring. We wanted to make sure that in both the living and the dead worlds the characters in the crowds were always interacting and clearly caring about each other. They're hardly ever by themselves.

PAUL MENDOZA

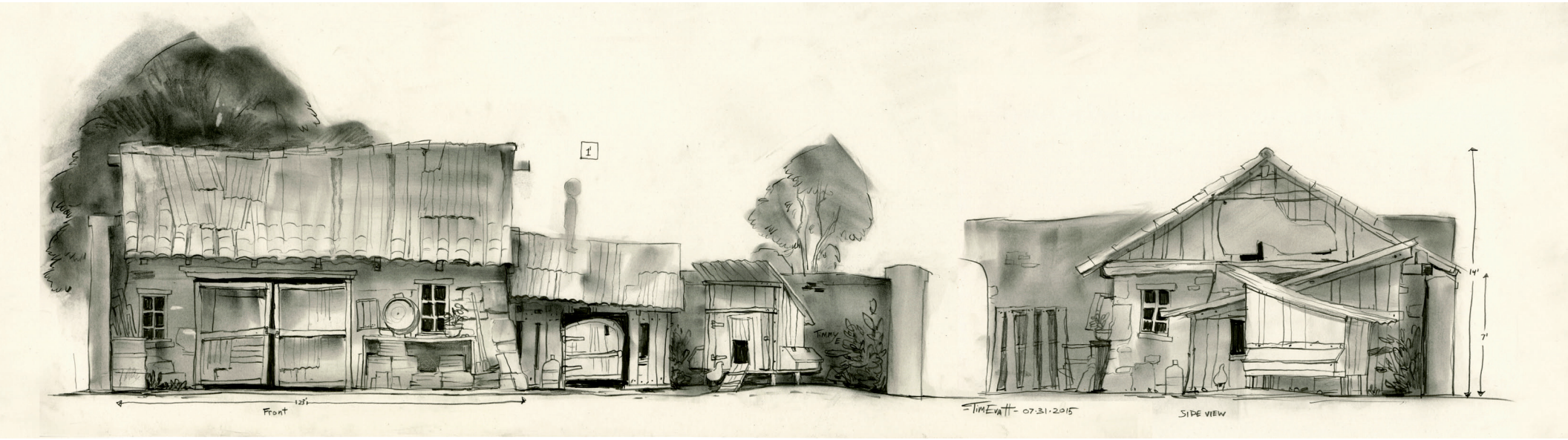
Crowds Animation Supervisor

Nathaniel McLaughlin Digital

THE RIVERA FAMILY HOME

We decided the Rivera family compound had started a long time ago as a shop, maybe part of a larger building that no longer exists. As the family grew, and as the business grew, they would have created living areas on one side and expanded the shop on the other, adding on to those spaces as needed. It became an important visual storytelling tool for the family because you could see that history from the oldest parts of the compound to the newest.

NAT MCLAUGHLIN
Sets Art Director



Tim Evatt Pencil

Nathaniel McLaughlin Digital

THE RIVERA FAMILY SHOE-MAKERS

I'm from Guanajuato, Mexico, and I come from a family of shoemakers: my dad is a shoemaker, my grandfathers on both sides were shoemakers, and all of my mom's brothers are shoemakers too. I wasn't as involved with my dad's practice growing up because he never really talked about his work; I think he was trying to let my sister and I choose what we wanted to do, as opposed to Miguel in the film who is forced to. My parents gave me a lot of options and I'm very grateful for that. My mom actually took me to my first drawing class. Both of my parents were so excited when they found out I was working on this film. They felt it was fate. My mom started crying.

ANA RAMÍREZ

Sketch Artist

Nathaniel McLaughlin Digital

Huy Nguyen Digital

Nathaniel McLaughlin Digital

Shelly Wan Digital

LA OFRENDA

During the days of Día de los Muertos, the split between the dead and the living no longer exists; the two worlds become one. The *ofrenda,* or altar, is the place where families unite in a process which curates a living memory of their loved ones. A major element of this reunion is the placement of objects on the *ofrenda*—recalling the spirit of those we have lost—such as a photo, favorite foods, and items symbolizing favorite pastimes or hobbies. Another important symbolic element is the marigold, or *cempasúchil,* which emits a unique aroma when crushed. It's believed this combination of smell and bright orange color acts as an aromatic siren, leading the dead back to their waiting families.

MARCELA DAVISON AVILÉS
Cultural Heritage Consultant

1–2 Shelly Wan, Layout by Manny Hernandez Digital
3 Ana Ramírez Digital

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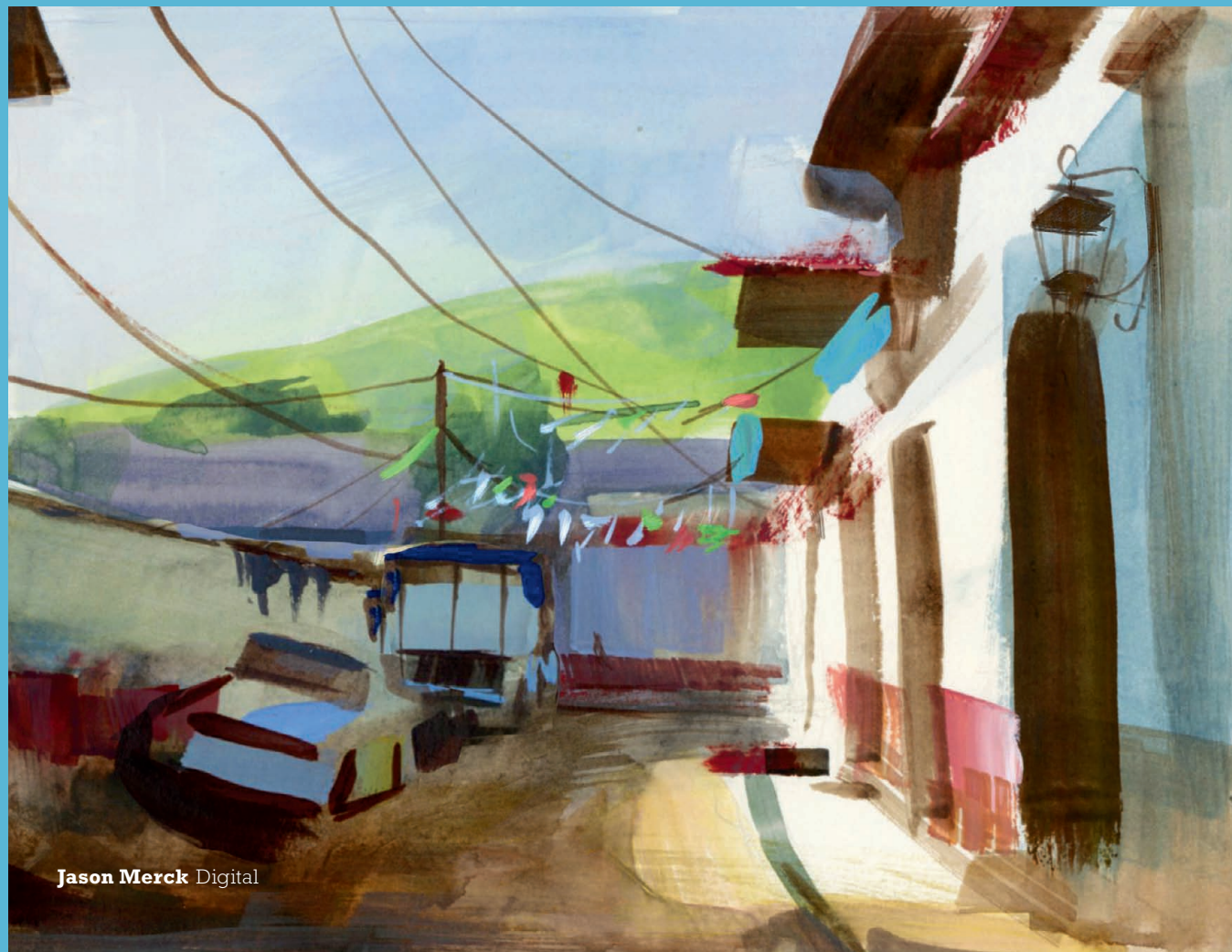
SANTA CECILIA

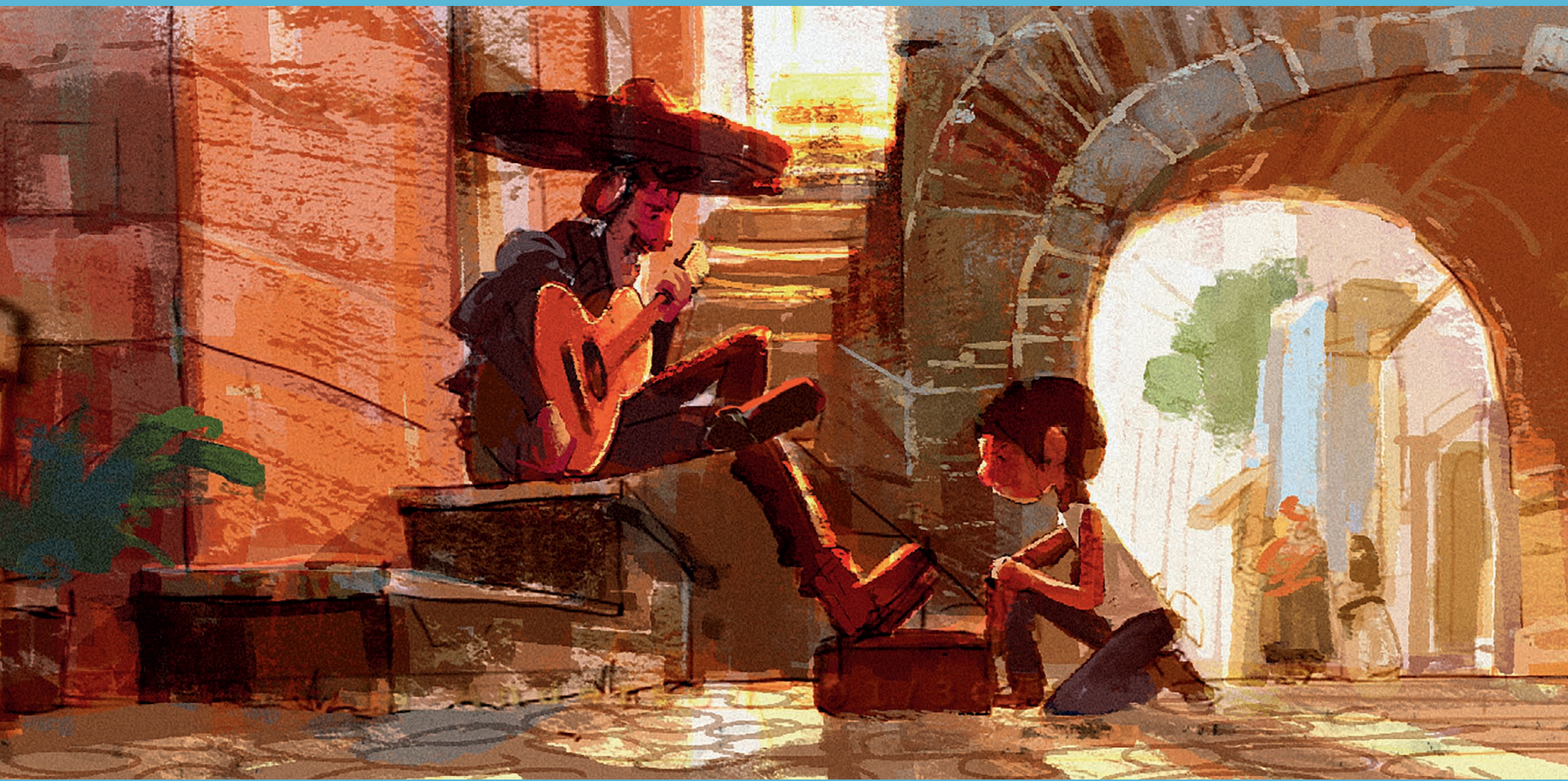
Because we knew we were going to take the audience on this fantastical journey, we consciously made Santa Cecilia the complete opposite of the Land of the Dead. Everything from the modest height of the buildings to the scale of the town to its sunbaked, more subdued daytime palette was intentionally designed to contrast with the verticality and bright color of the nocturnal Land of the Dead. The name of the town came from one of our writers, Matt Aldrich, who thought it would be fitting to have Miguel live in a place named for the patron saint of music.

JASON KATZ
Story Supervisor

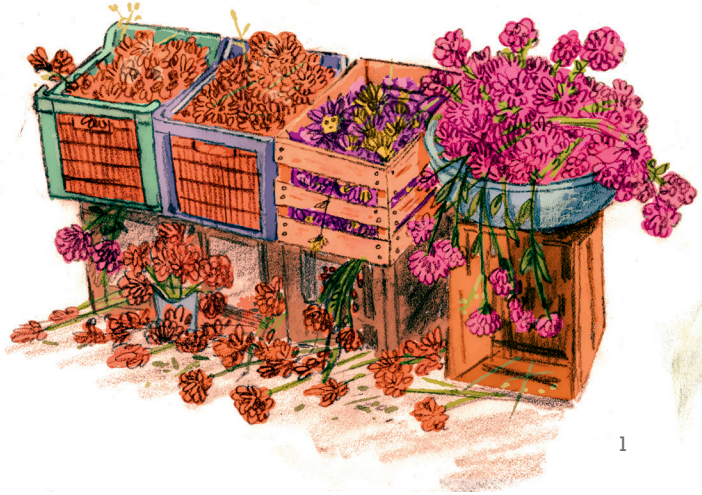
Jason Merck Digital



Jason Merck Digital



Huy Nguyen, Layout by Xavier Riffault and Dean Kelly Digital



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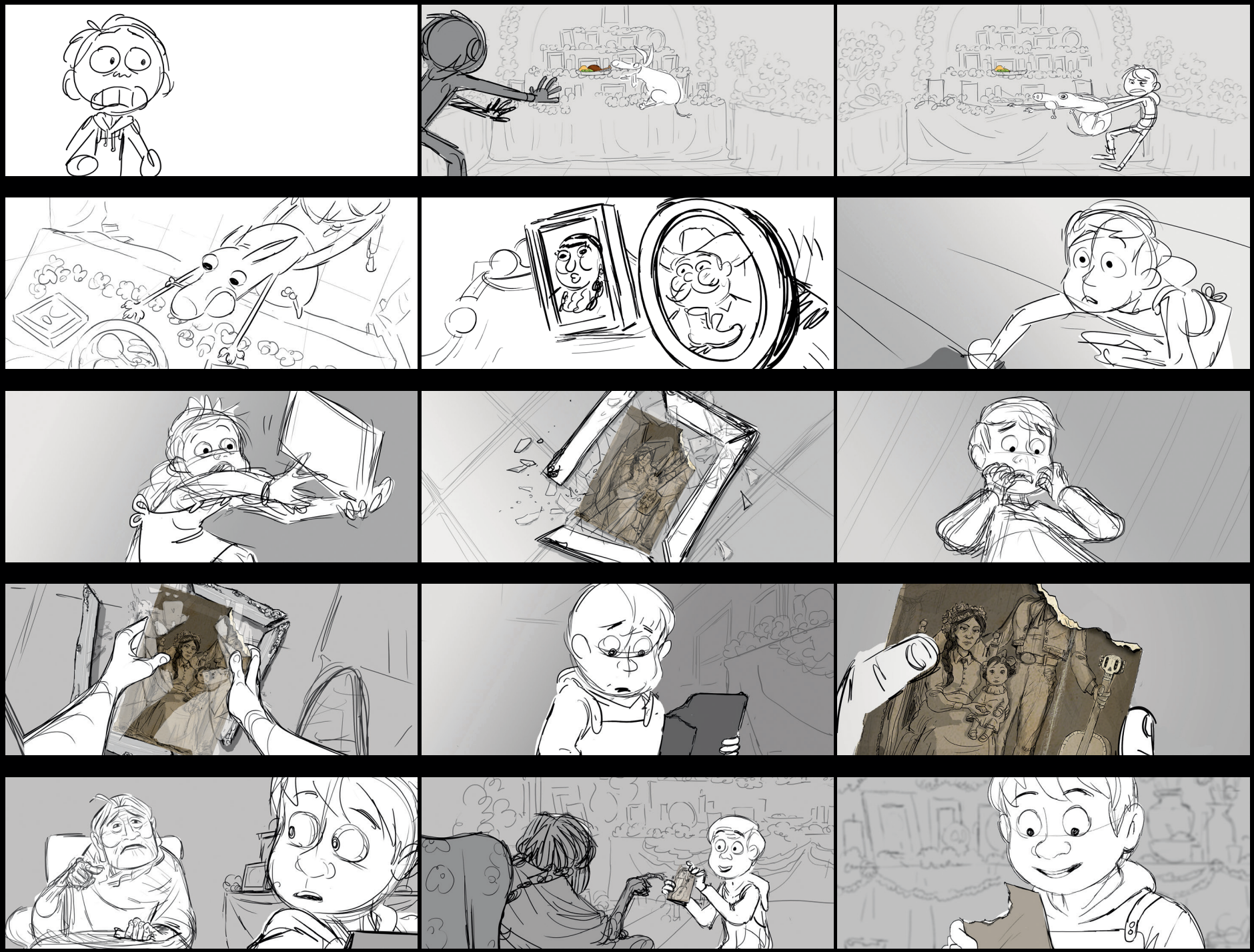
1–4 Ana Ramírez Watercolor / Charcoal / Pen / Digital
5 Jason Merck Pencil
6 Harley Jessup Pencil / Digital

Huy Nguyen Digital

MIGUEL'S HIDEOUT

Any kid—any human probably—can identify with the idea of being passionate about something, but feeling like you have to protect it in a special, private space because other people might not understand it. In real life, this would probably just be some records and tchotchkes and maybe a candle or two, but one of the cool things about our job as filmmakers is that we get to go beyond what would probably happen to create something dreamlike and perfect for the scene. Sets did a fantastic job building this incredible altar, and I think there's probably nothing that candlelight doesn't make look amazing and romantic and special.

DANIELLE FEINBERG
Director of Photography - Lighting



Rosana Sullivan, Nate Stanton, Jason Katz, Dean Kelly, Octavio Rodriguez, Manny Hernandez Digital

Digital Render

A SECRET DISCOVERY

The *ofrenda* is an integral part of the celebration of Día de los Muertos, the visual representation of a culture of remembering your loved ones, so of course we wanted to use it in the film. But for our story, the *ofrenda* is also a really beautiful way to express the connection between generations. In Miguel's family, it's the one point of connection between family members who otherwise can't communicate very well. And I like that all of the events, all of the discoveries, all of the mysteries around where Miguel comes from and who he wants to be, come together at this one point, which is this photo at the very top.

ADRIAN MOLINA
Co-Director, Screenwriter

ERNESTO DE LA CRUZ

We wanted de la Cruz to be the consummate entertainer and to really look like a movie star, so we studied several well-known Mexican entertainers from over the years—everyone from early stars like Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete to more contemporary performers like Vicente Fernández. It was important to design a character that Miguel and the audience could totally trust, a nice, warm, grandfatherly figure. We went down many different paths, but while working with Tony Fucile, we really ended up nailing de la Cruz's design, with that broad-shouldered, large-chinned look.

LEE UNKRICH
Director

Jerome Ranft Clay

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1 Tony Fucile Pen
2 Daniel Arriaga Pen
3–5 Tony Fucile Pen
6 Shelly Wan, Jenna Huerta Digital
7 Tom Gately Digital
8 Daniel Arriaga Digital

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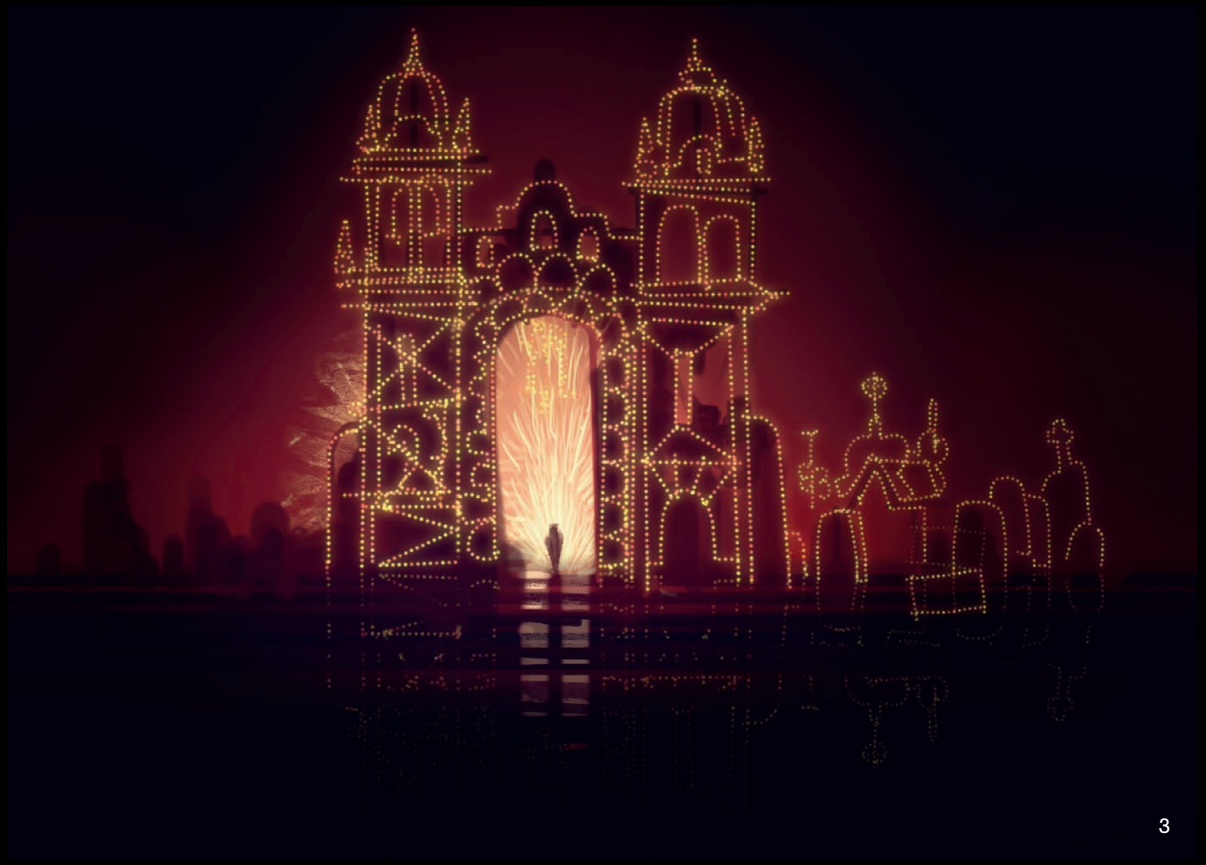

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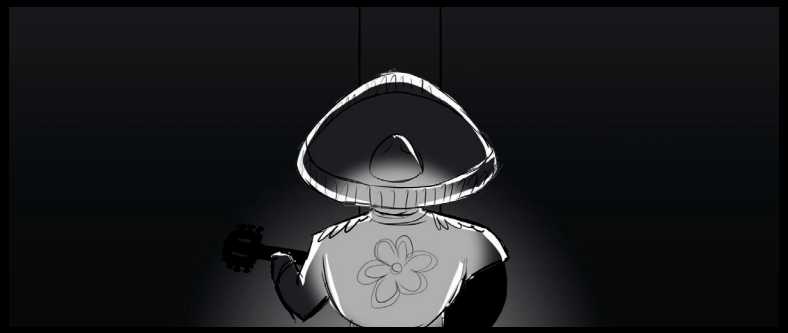
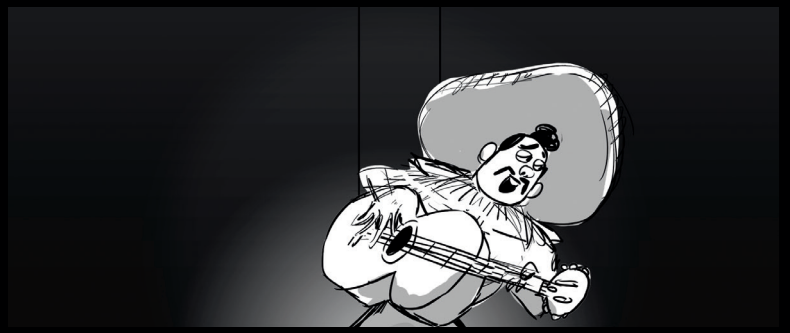
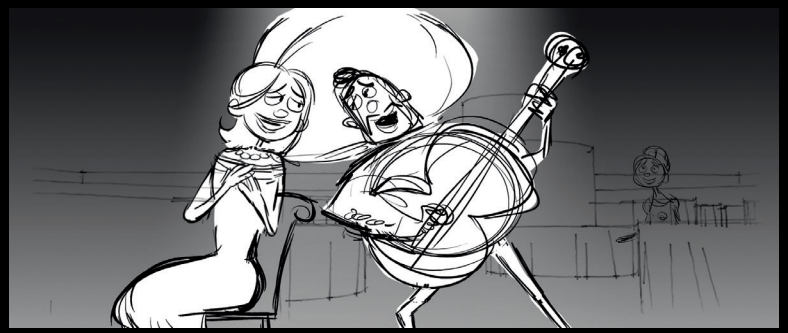
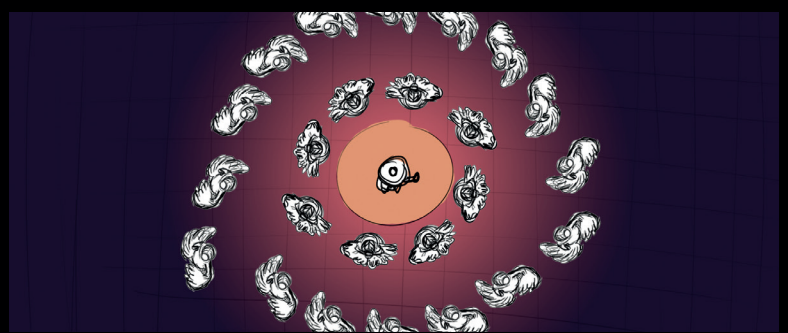
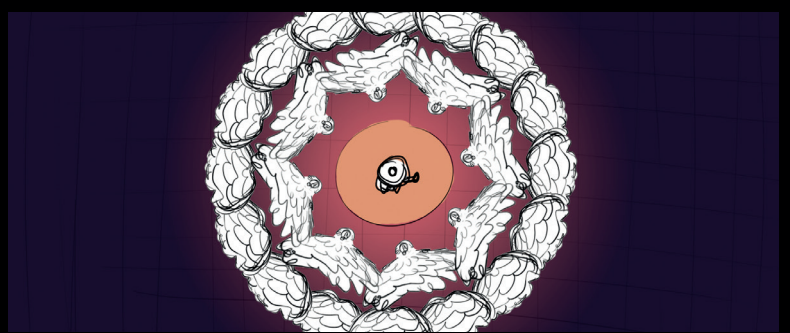
1 Tim Evatt Digital
2–3 Robert Kondo Digital
4 Robert Kondo, Harley Jessup Digital

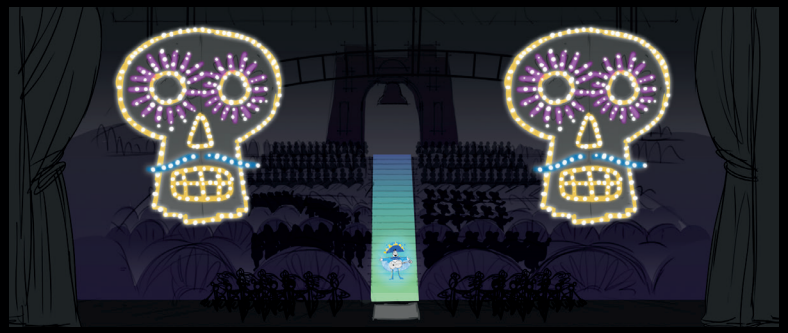
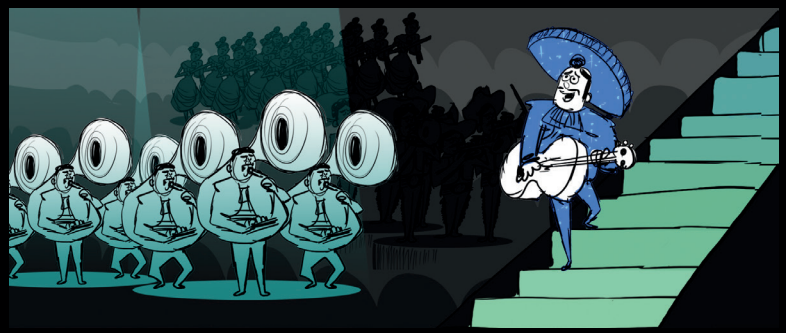
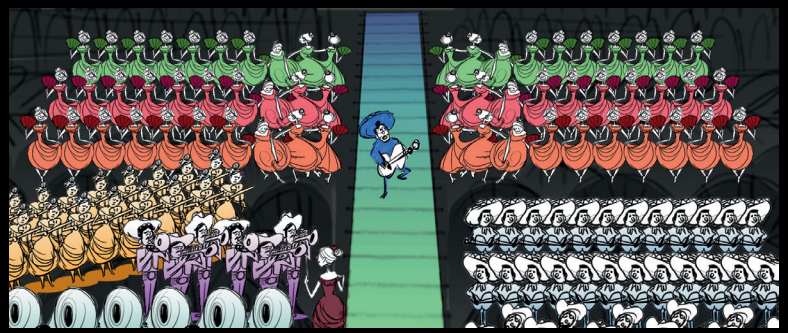
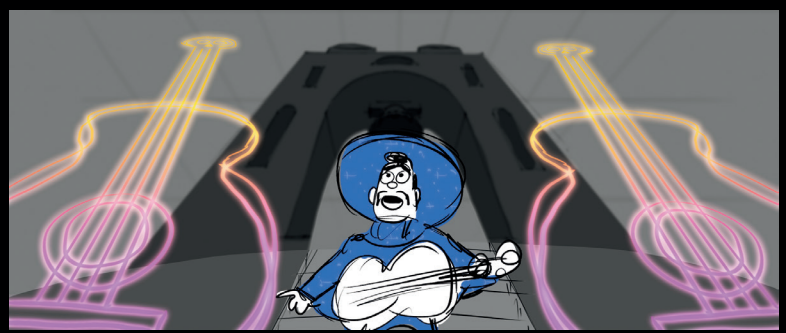
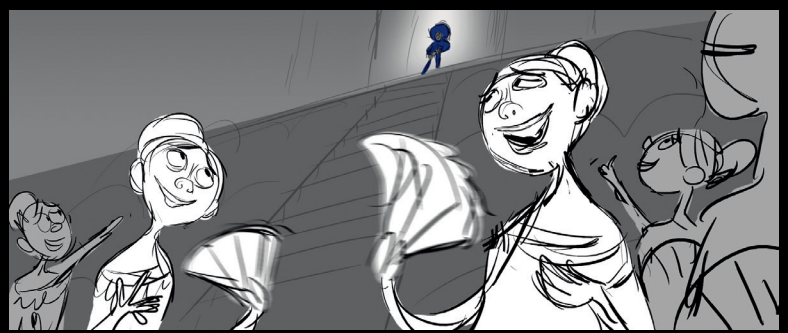
REMEMBER ME

The bold and expressive sense of color in Mexico is really unique. Over the course of our research trips, I noticed a recurring palette in the folk art, especially in the woven and embroidered textiles. I really wanted to use this brilliant, harmonious palette in our film to help pull the many disparate visual elements together. The world of *Coco* is very layered, and its creation is the combined effort of about 150 artists and technical directors. Our shared color palette was one of the keys to unifying the look and this immediately allowed us all to pull in the same direction.

HARLEY JESSUP
Production Designer

Matt Aspbury, Danielle Feinberg, Harley Jessup, Dean Kelly Photographs

THE CEMETERY

There are two primary areas where Día de los Muertos celebrations take place: the home, with the creation of the *ofrenda,* and the cemetery. On the appropriate night—November 1 for *los angelitos,* or children, and November 2 for adults—family members clean and decorate the graves of their loved ones and await their return. Gravesites are commemorated in a manner similar to the home *ofrenda,* with symbolic flowers, photos, and food. Family members will picnic there, reunited with the memory and spirit of those who have passed. If a grave is unattended, others will come together to care for it, making sure no spirit is forgotten. In the Mexican tradition, cemeteries are not scary or sad places, but places to make joy from sorrow at the place where memory reposes.

MARCELA DAVISON AVILÉS
Cultural Heritage Consultant

Ernesto Nemesio, Sharon Calahan Digital

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1 Daisuke Tsutsumi Digital **2–5 Jason Merck** Digital **6 Armand Baltazar, John Nevarez** Digital

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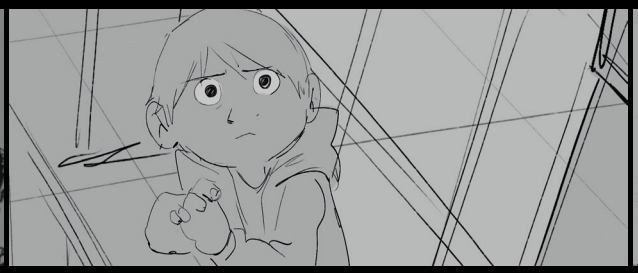

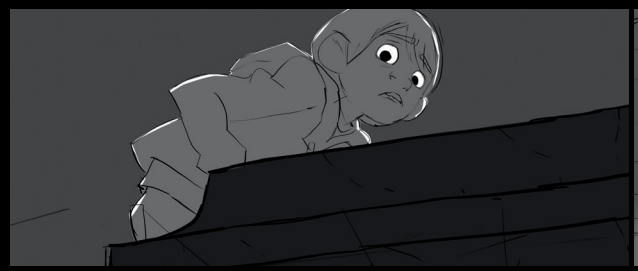
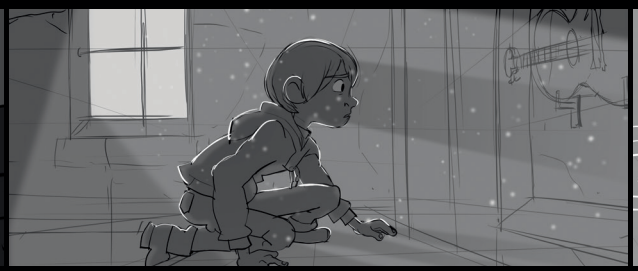
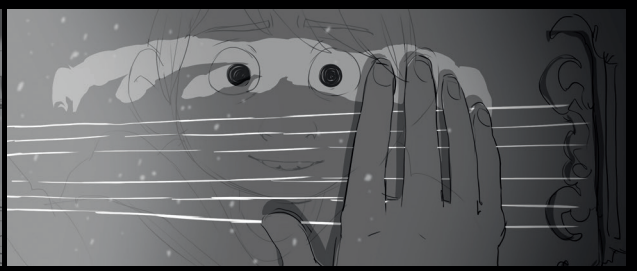
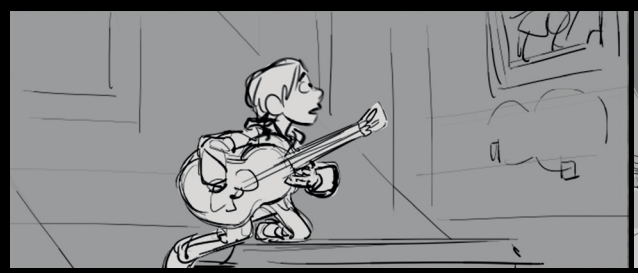

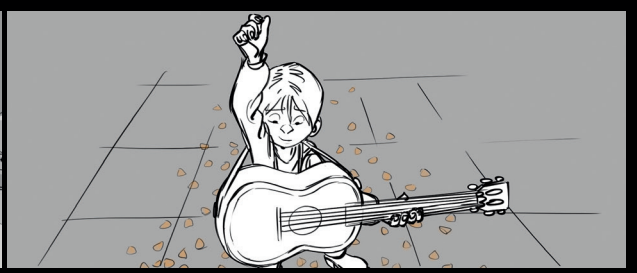
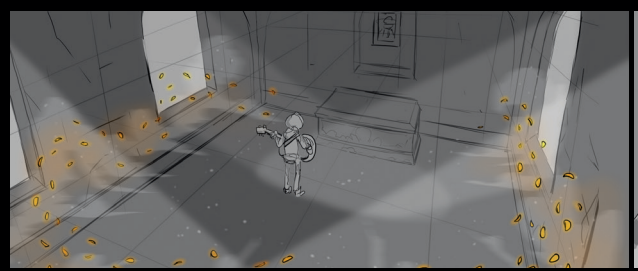

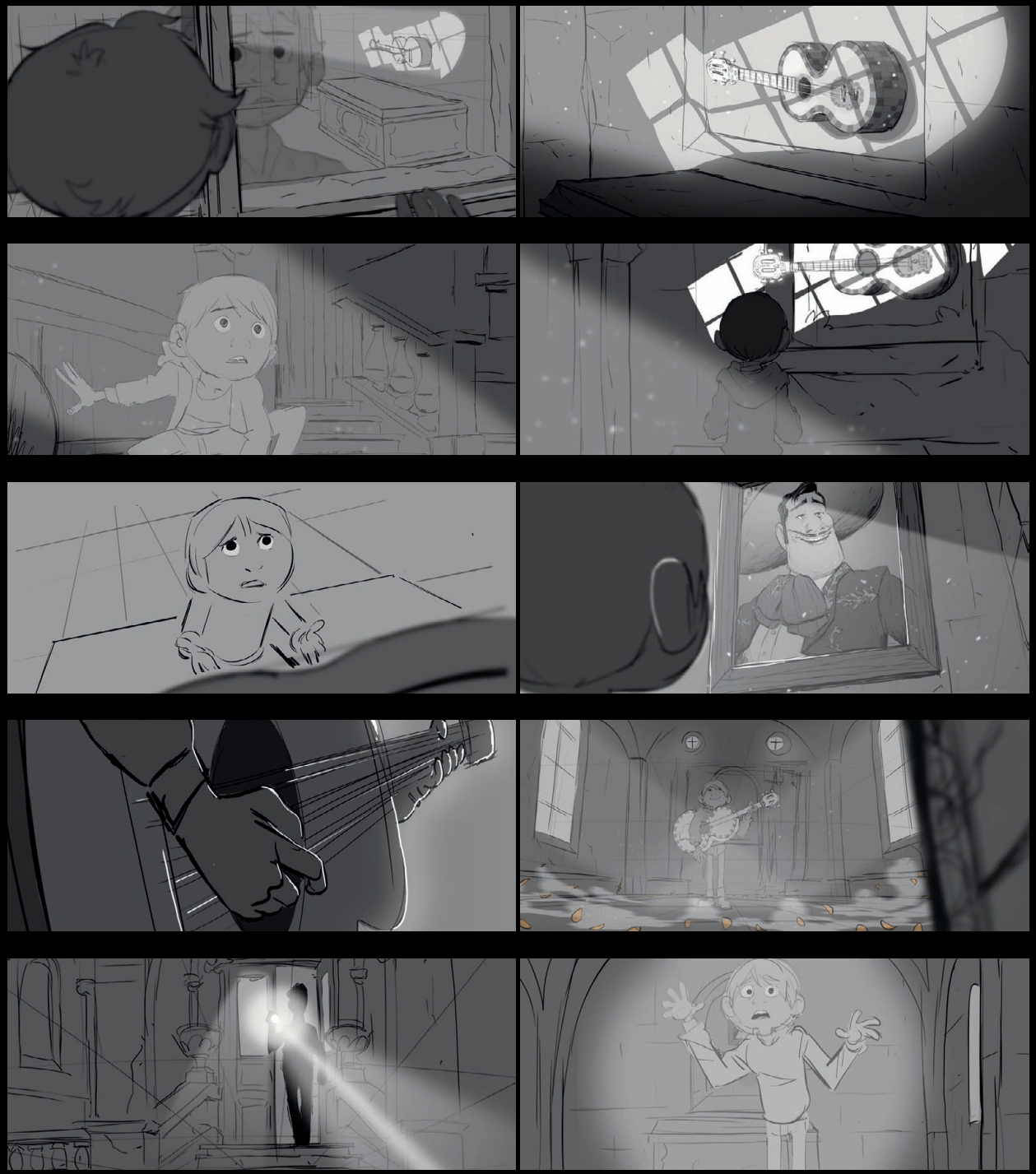

Dean Kelly, Octavio Rodriguez, Xavier Riffault Digital

SEIZE YOUR MOMENT

The important thing for this sequence was to make everything feel motivated. The audience has to be rooting for Miguel even as he's breaking into the tomb, yet still feel like he's fundamentally a good kid. Originally, strumming the guitar was the magical moment that transported Miguel to the Land of the Dead. But that meant he had to keep the guitar with him, and the rules got very confusing. So we decided that it would be more about a chain of events than a single action. Once he takes the guitar off the wall, we see the marigold petals flicker and start to glow. They whirl up when Miguel strums the guitar, but that's more for us than him—he has his eyes closed. When Miguel starts to see flashlights and hear voices, he sets the guitar down deliberately to apologize—so he doesn't have it any more—and it's when the caretaker comes in and walks right through him that he completely transcends to the other plane.

DEAN KELLY
Lead Story Artist

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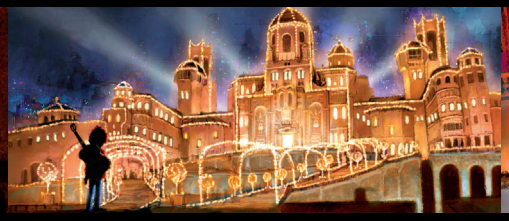
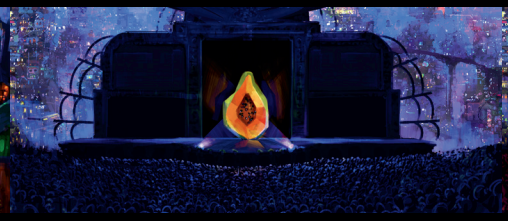
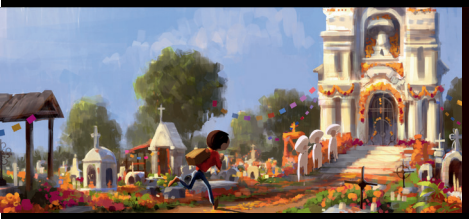
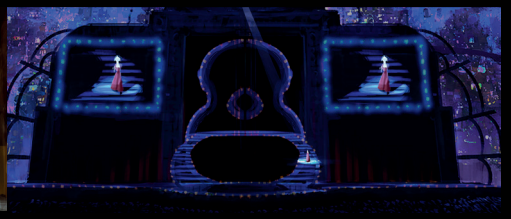
1 **Shelly Wan** Digital **2** **Huy Nguyen** Digital **3** **Shelly Wan** Digital **4** **Ernesto Nemesio** Digital

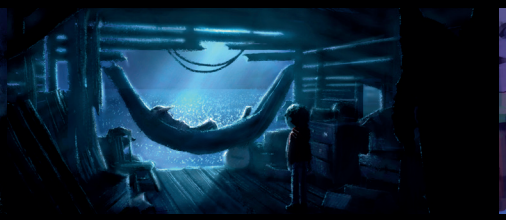




Sharon Calahan, Ernesto Nemesio, Huy Nguyen, Shelly Wan, Robert Kondo, Daisuke Tsutsumi, Danielle Feinberg Digital



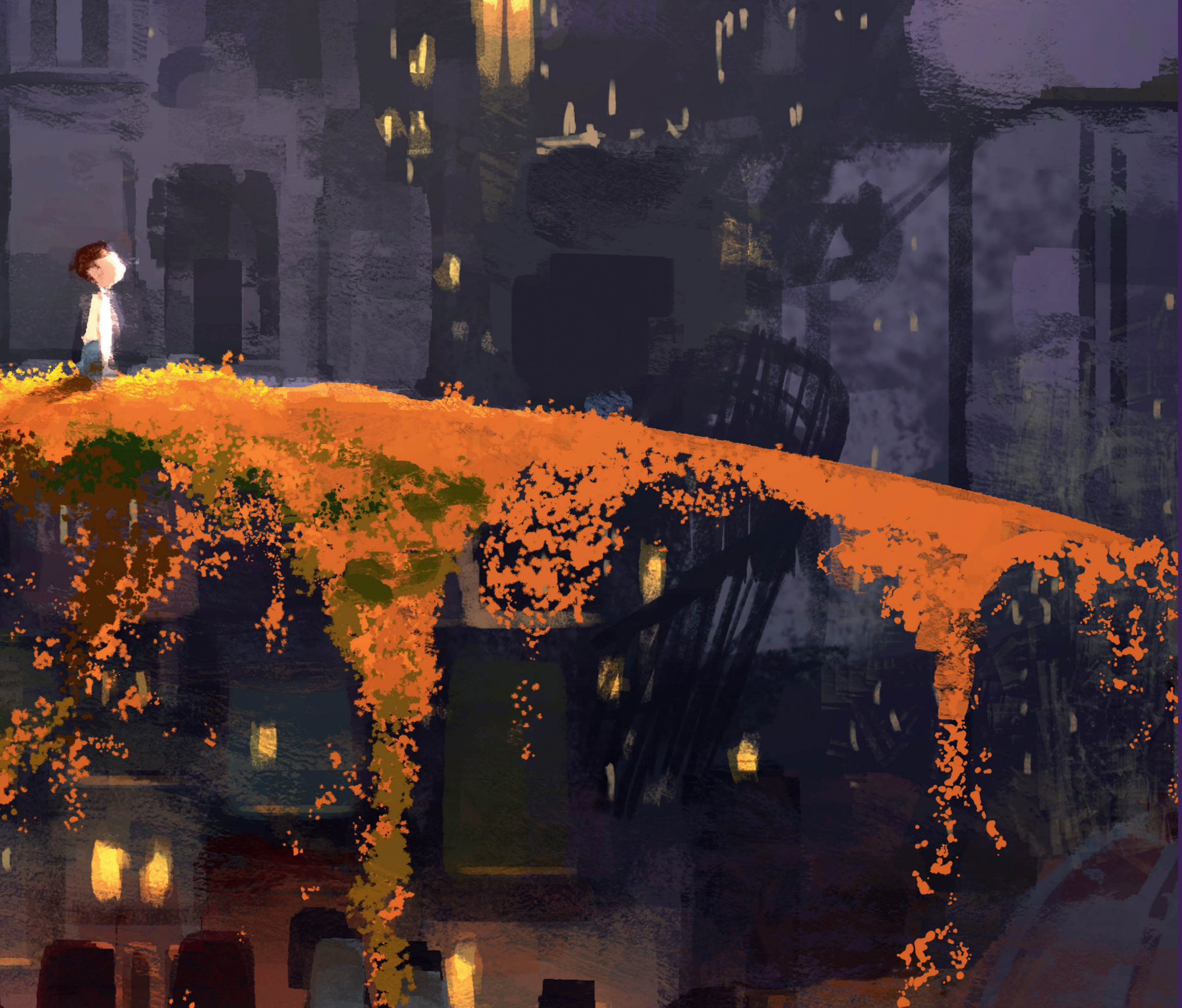




THE COLOR SCRIPT

This film is really, really colorful. That made it very exciting, very appealing, but very challenging to light. When you're in a world where everything is colorful and nearly everything takes place at the same time—nighttime—and there's no real weather, you've lost a lot of the variables that you would typically use to shape emotion from a lighting perspective. So, in the Land of the Dead, our main tools were limiting the palette and controlling the atmosphere. We tried to set moments that were more emotional, where you needed the audience to reflect, in places where less color would come in. And in scenes where the super-dense quality of the world needed taming, we used murk and fog to subdue the complexity and direct the audience's eye.

DANIELLE FEINBERG
Director of Photography - Lighting



THE LAND OF THE DEAD

This was one of the big buyoffs we had early on of what the Land of the Dead might look like. We had just done two smaller pieces figuring out the look and style of the individual towers, so this piece was an exploration of how a whole city might visually work—how the towers might be interconnected, and how we might add skull shapes in the architecture and the light sources. It's a very theatrical image, big in scope with a lot of fantasy in it, but I also wanted it to have some of the feeling of a familiar Mexican village. I wanted the moment to feel like a celebration of life and a celebration of color, as lively and dramatic as I could make it.

ERNESTO NEMESIO
Lighting Studies Artist

Ernesto Nemesio Digital

Matt Aspbury, Harley Jessup Photographs

CREATING A WORLD

Because there is no fixed, established vision of what the Land of the Dead looks like, we had some latitude in designing it. Our Land of the Dead is focused only on the people who have lived and died in Mexico, and it reflects the history of the country over the millennia. We wanted to show the world as a joyous place and we expressed all of this in the tremendous, layered towers whose vivid colors were inspired by the hillside city of Guanajuato. The iconography of Día de los Muertos, as we experience it today, is strongly inspired by the turn-of-the-twentieth-century artwork of José Guadalupe Posada and we embraced this Victorian aesthetic as a unifying thread running through the film. You can see Posada's influence in the skeletal character and costume designs, the murals and graphics, as well as in period locations like the Marigold Grand Central Station.

HARLEY JESSUP
Production Designer

LAYERS OF HISTORY

The design of the Land of the Dead is an homage to Mexico City. Like Mexico City, which was built on a lake in the basin of a giant volcano, the towers of the Land of the Dead rise up out of the water. The first layers are pyramids, and as they get higher and higher the successive layers become more and more modern. The idea is that as souls come over from the land of the living, they build additions to the existing towers in the style that is current to them.

DARLA K. ANDERSON

Producer

We always want to create history in our sets, to have the details tell the story of the place we're in. So the richness of the reference footage we saw coming back from the research trips was like a dream. There were all these details that made you say things like, "oh, this door must have been added later," or "these timbers rotted out but they put another one over the top"—they told this whole story. And then when we started seeing the artwork for the layered towers, it was the same kind of history, but more literal—from the pyramids all the way up to the cranes for construction at the top. I remember very early on, someone described the look as "fantastical verticality," which I thought was absolutely perfect.

CHRIS BERNARDI

Sets Supervisor

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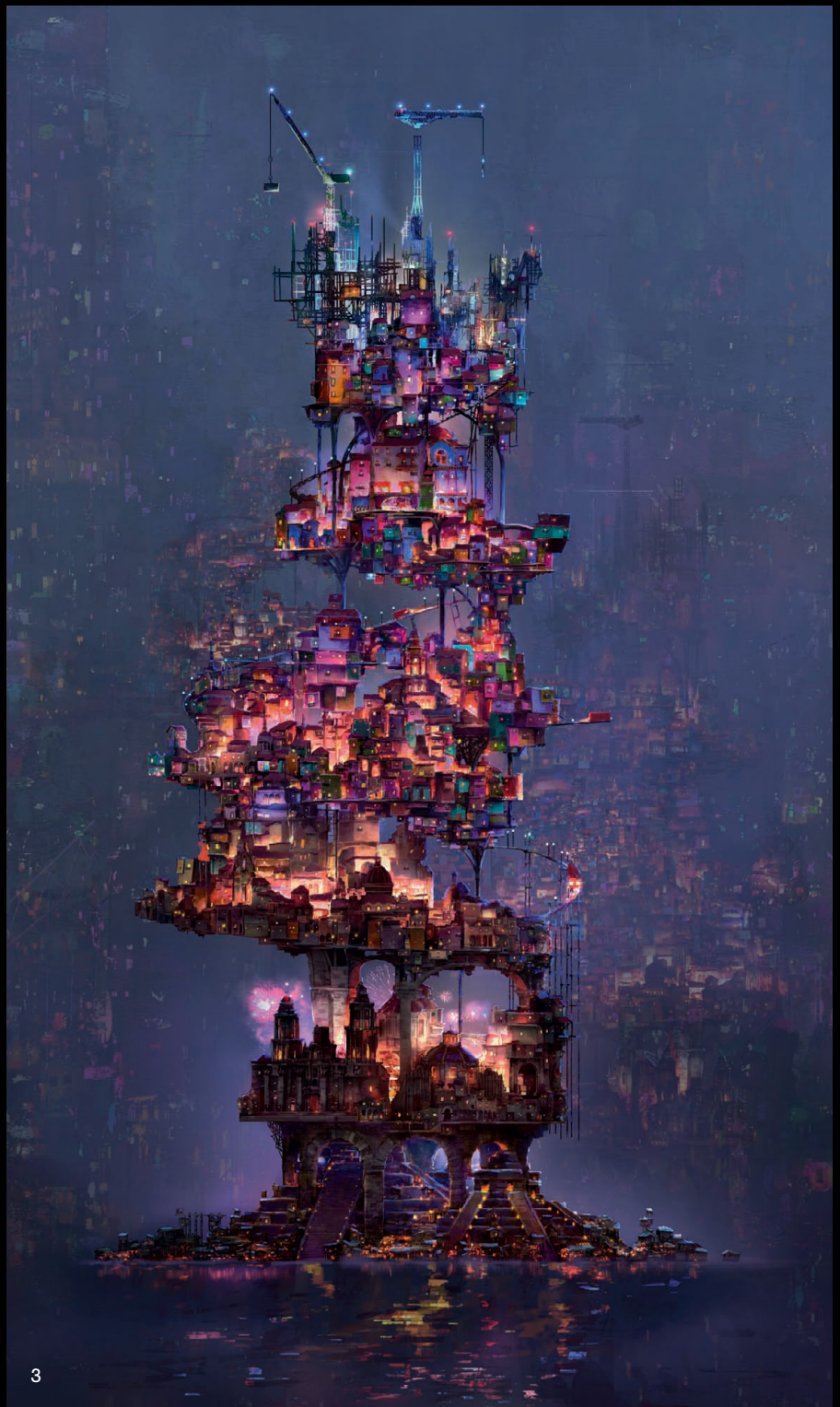

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1–2 Daisuke Tsutsumi Digital
3 Ernesto Nemesio Digital
4 Daisuke Tsutsumi Digital

Tadahiro Uesugi Digital

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1 **Harley Jessup** Digital
2 **Shelly Wan** Digital
3 **Jennifer Chang** Digital
4 **Robert Kondo** Digital
5 **Nathaniel McLaughlin** Digital

SKELETONS!

What's great about the skeletons in this film is that they're not scary characters; they're people from our past. We want them to be funny and kind of crazy in how they move, but at the end of the day, we want them to be relatable as people we loved, as family members who've passed on. And that gives the challenge of animating them a layer of depth that we've really, really loved. We want people to see these characters and laugh, but at the same time say, aw, that was my grandma, or my sister, or my brother.

GINI SANTOS
Animation Supervisor

We wanted the skeletons' faces to be expressive, but still feel like bone, so we decided that we would shape the eye sockets, but try to keep the nose, cheekbones and silhouette of the skull fairly rigid. Our biggest liberty, from a design point of view, was giving the skeletons "lips"—we needed to be able to shape the mouth so that the characters could talk and emote with a full range of expression. To remind the viewer that it's a hard surface, and to give the indication of the traditional skeleton mouth shape, we tried to keep the lines of the mouth a little wider, a little more graphic and angular.

MIKE VENTURINI
Animation Supervisor

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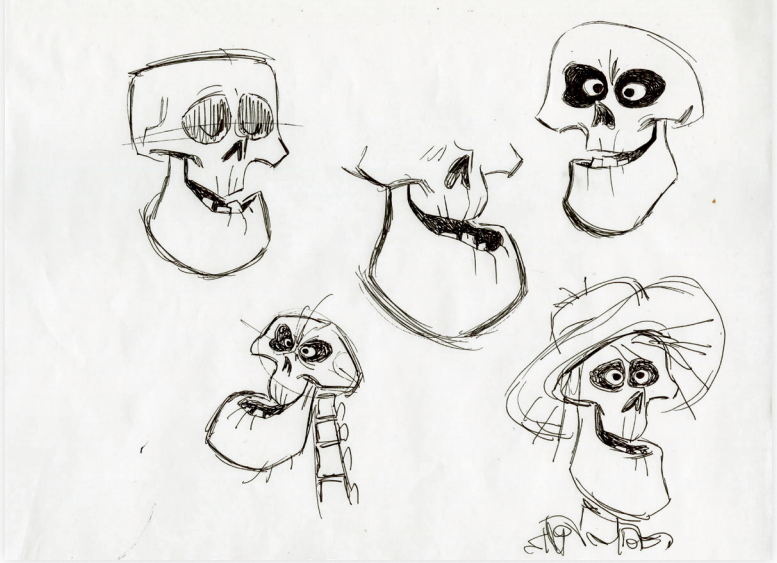
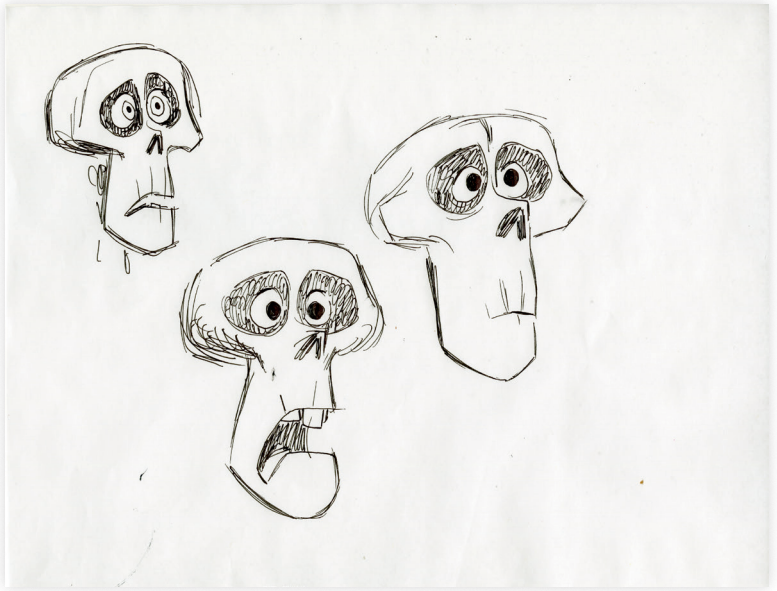
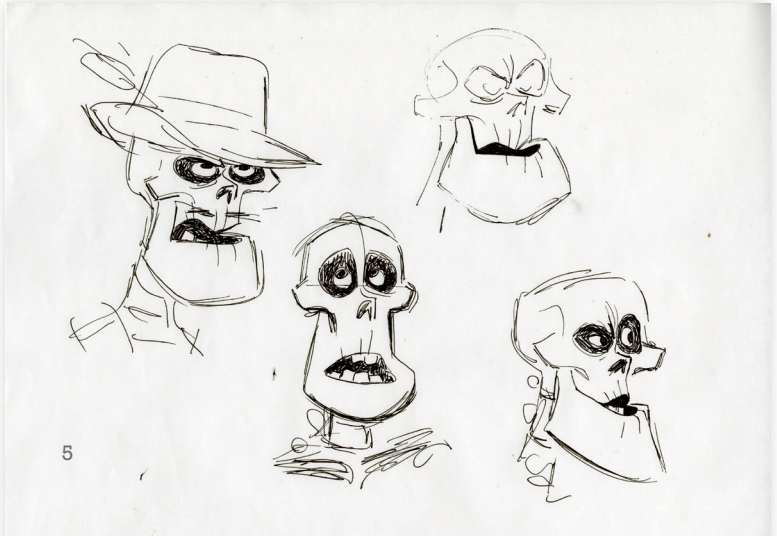
1 Tom Gately, Harley Jessup Digital **2–4 Zaruhi Galstyan** Pencil
5 Guilherme Jacinto Pencil **6 Carter Goodrich** Pencil







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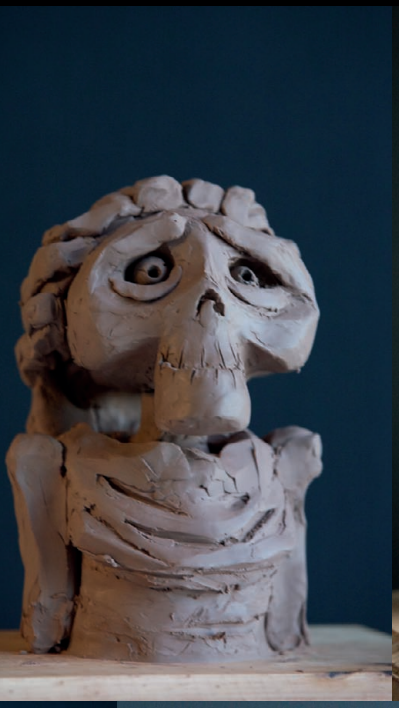
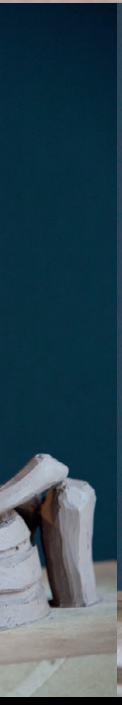
1 Jason Merck Digital **2 Harley Jessup** Digital **3 Travis Ruiz** Digital **4–5 Zaruhi Galstyan** Digital

Zaruhi Galstyan Digital

Daniel Arriaga, Greg Dykstra, Zaruhi Galstyan, Tom Gately, Nathaniel McLaughlin, Jason Merck, John Nevarez, Louis Thomas, Chris Sasaki Clay





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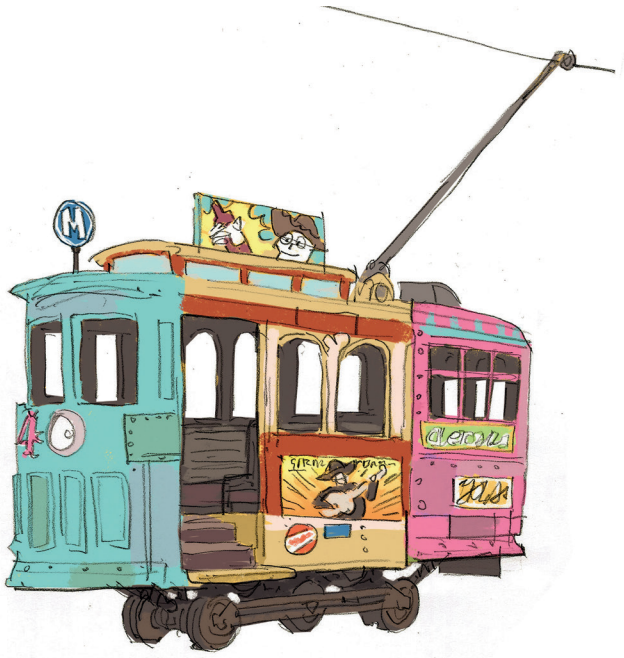
1 John Nevarez Digital **2 Grant Alexander** Digital **3 Daniela Strijleva** Digital



Grant Alexander Pencil / Digital

THE DEAD RIVERAS

For the costumes of the dead Riveras, we really wanted to go with Victorian silhouettes, so the clothes had high collars, and the materials were very of the era: nice gauzy cottons and linens, wools, and thicker, sturdier materials. We went with slightly darker, more desaturated colors to get that period feel. All this was a nice contrast to the bone color of the faces; when you're costuming skeletons, you have to really draw the eye to the face.

BRYN IMAGIRE
Shading Art Director

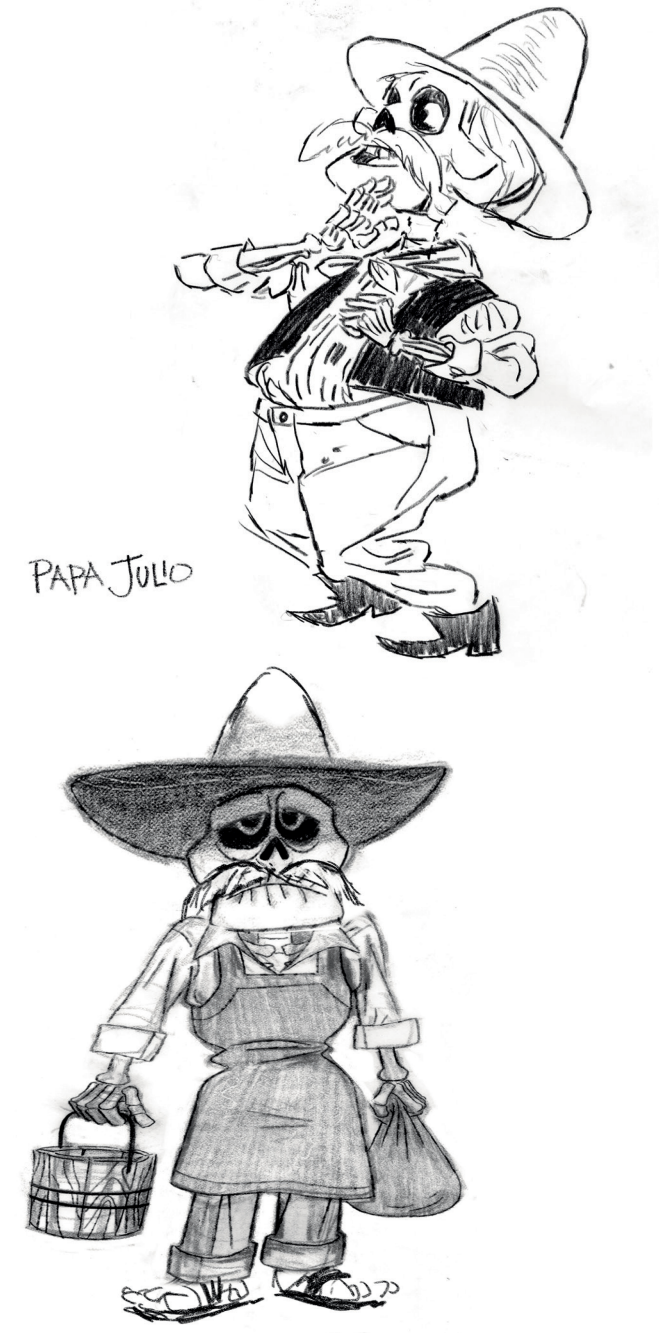
Louis Thomas Digital

Zaruhi Galstyan Digital

Daniela Strijleva Pen / Gouache

Daniel Arriaga Pencil

Daniela Strijleva Pen / Gouache



Daniel Arriaga Pencil

IMELDA

Imelda is the emotional antagonist of the film. Miguel wants his family to move on from the idea that music is not good; she's a traditionalist, stuck in the past. So she had to have this stern and somewhat austere quality. Because she is the matriarch of the Riveras, her clothing is detailed with marigolds, which in the film symbolize family. But Imelda also has a very soulful part of her that's revealed as we go further into the film—a beautiful singing voice and sensitivity to music. To try to capture some of that contrast in her character, I would listen to "La Llorona" over and over again while I was drawing, imagining her performing, trying to show that other side of her, that tender, more passionate side.

DANIELA STRIJLEVA
Character Artist

HECTOR

When we started experimenting with the skeleton version of Hector, we were trying to figure out two things. First, what is skeleton physicality like? And second, what is Hector's personality like? In the movie there is this idea of this energy, this force, that keeps your bones together more strongly the more you're remembered. Hector is not very well remembered, so looking at videos of marionettes—that clackety, jangly motion—was helpful in figuring out the specificity of his movement. We also played with the idea of him having a limp, just to reinforce that he's been through some really tough times. Gael García Bernal, who was cast in the middle of the character development process, brought a lot of very charming, funny inspiration to the character.

GUILHERME JACINTO
Directing Animator

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1 **Daniel Arriaga** Digital
2 **Daniel López Muñoz** Digital
3 **Dean Kelly and Jason Katz** Digital
4 **Tony Fucile** Pen
5 **Daniel López Muñoz** Digital

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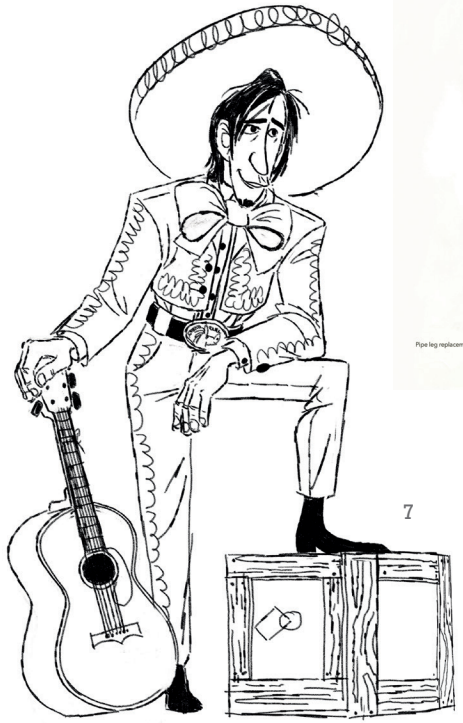

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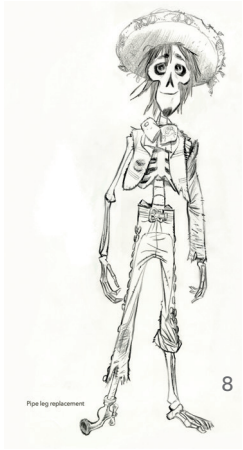

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6–7 Daniel Arriaga Digital
8 Daniel López Muñoz Pencil
9 Travis Ruiz Pen
10 Tony Fucile Pen
11–12 Shelly Wan Digital
13 Greg Dykstra Clay

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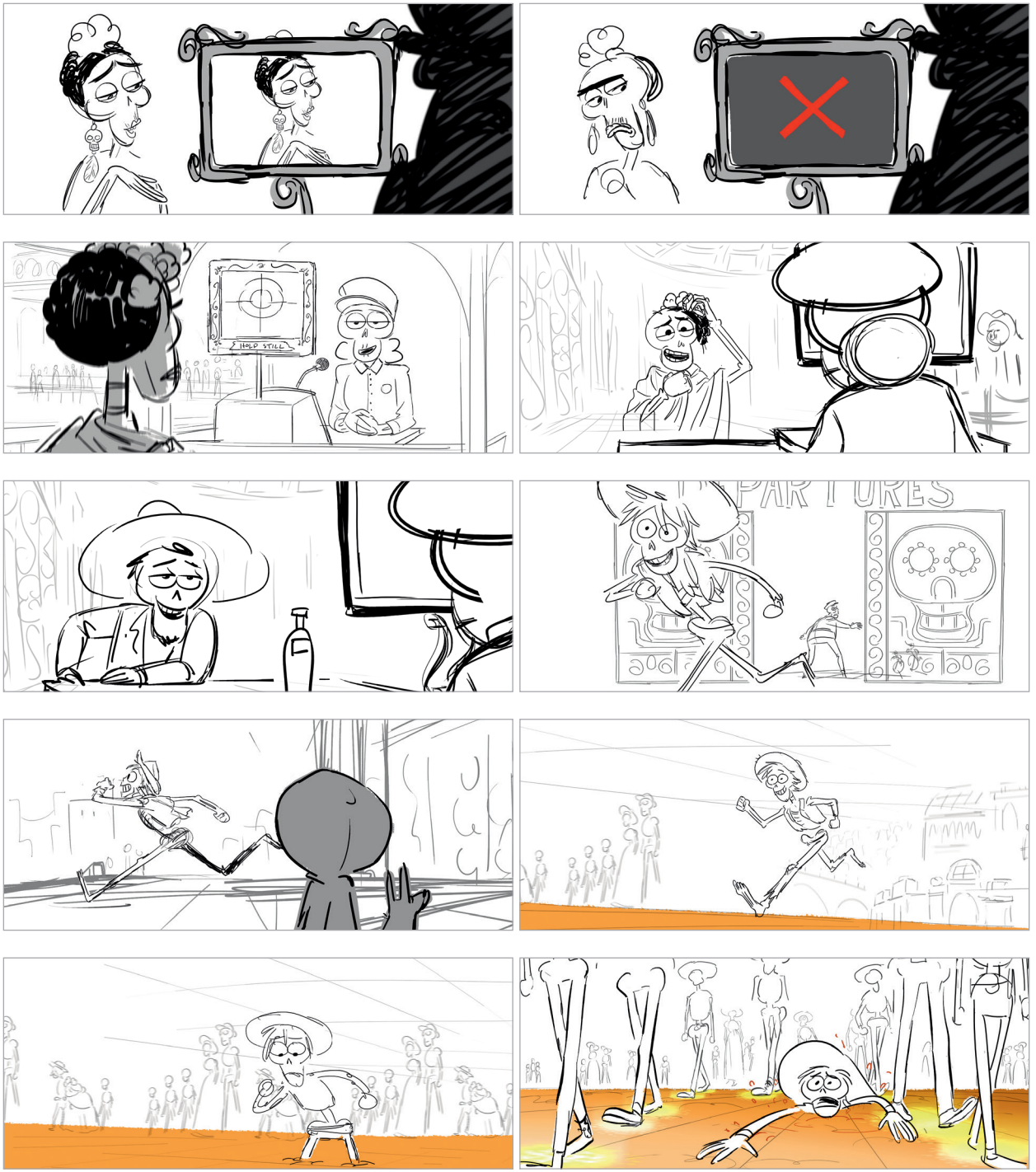
Daniela Strijleva Pen / Gouache

Greg Dykstra Clay

Daniela Strijleva Pen / Gouache



Rosana Sullivan, Tony Maki Digital

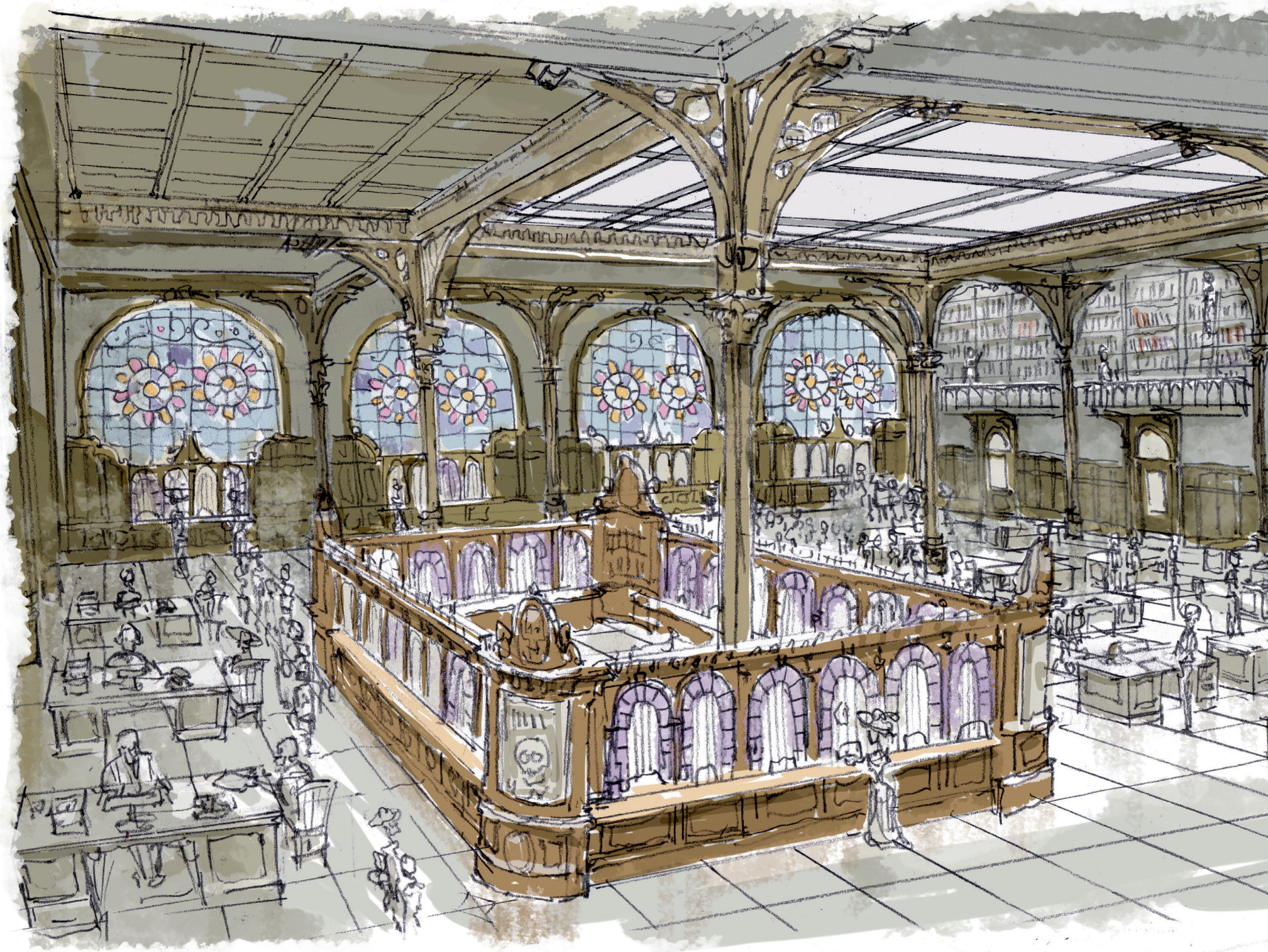
Sharon Calahan, Layout by Dean Kelly Digital

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY REUNIONS

By showing the bureaucracy of the Land of the Dead, we could visually explain the rules of the world and create a believable sense of place. In the story, the Department of Family Reunions is the office where ancestral records are kept and the photographs on each *ofrenda* are registered. This government bureau is part of the vast Marigold Grand Central Station complex, a transportation hub where antique streetcars and cable gondolas carry passengers throughout the Land of the Dead. To create this place, we studied Mexico's early-twentieth-century cast-iron architecture, including the Palacio de Correos, the Gran Hotel Ciudad de México, and Guanajuato's Mercado Hidalgo.

HARLEY JESSUP
Production Designer

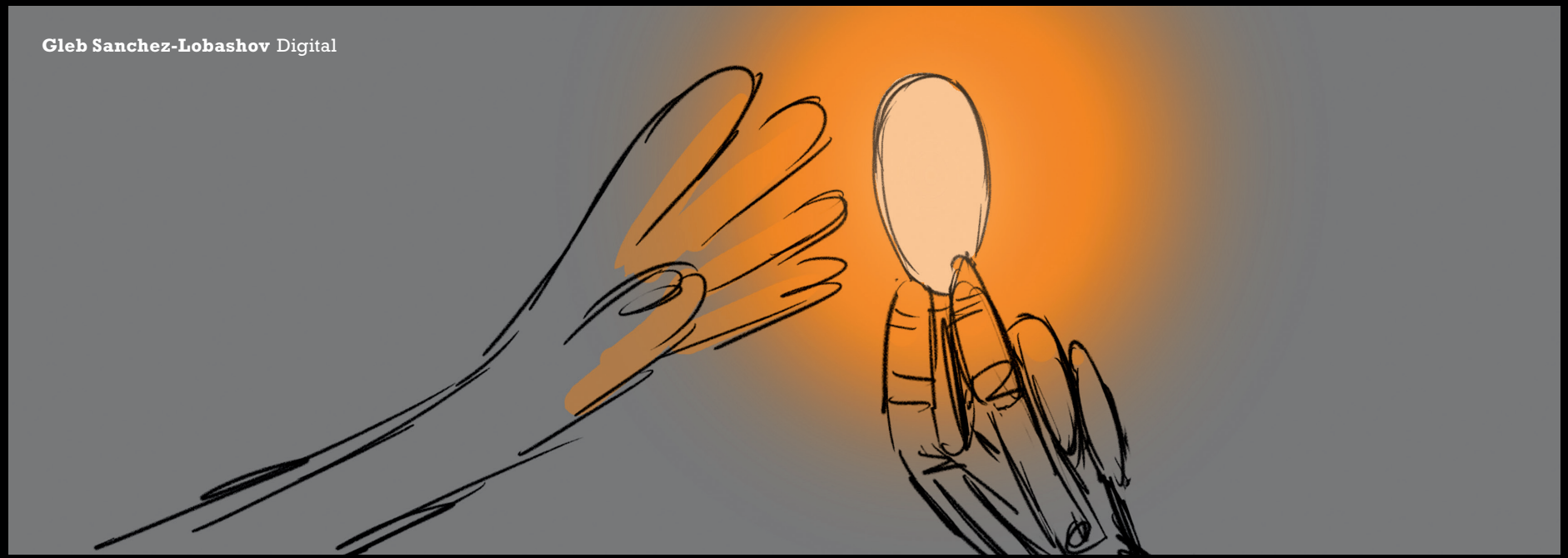
1 Harley Jessup Digital **2 Huy Nguyen** Digital **3 Danielle Feinberg, Huy Nguyen** Digital



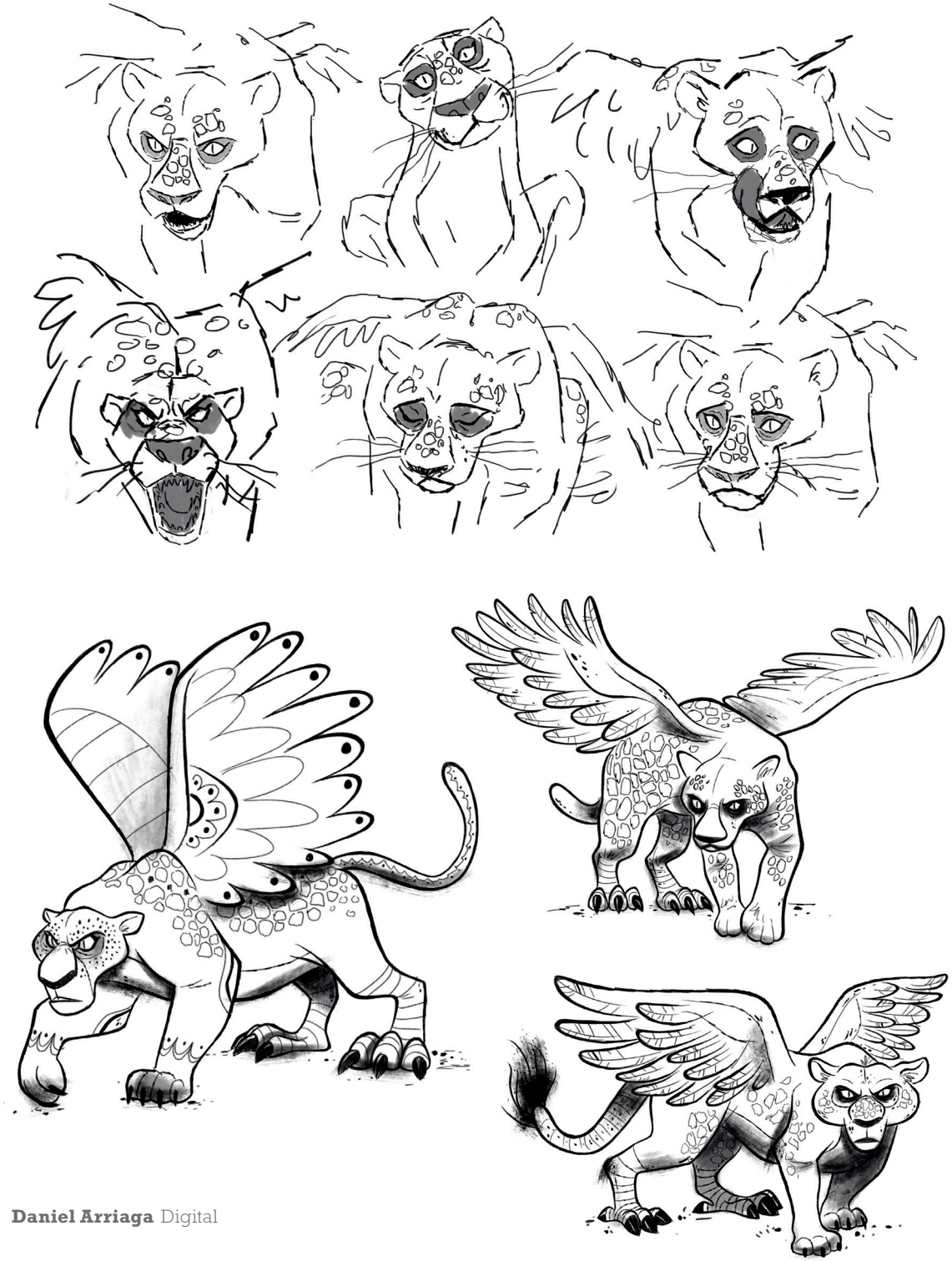
1 **Harley Jessup** Digital
2 **Sharon Calahan** Digital
3 **Shelly Wan** Digital

Shelly Wan Digital

Gleb Sanchez-Lobashov Digital



Zaruhi Galstyan Digital



Daniel Arriaga Digital

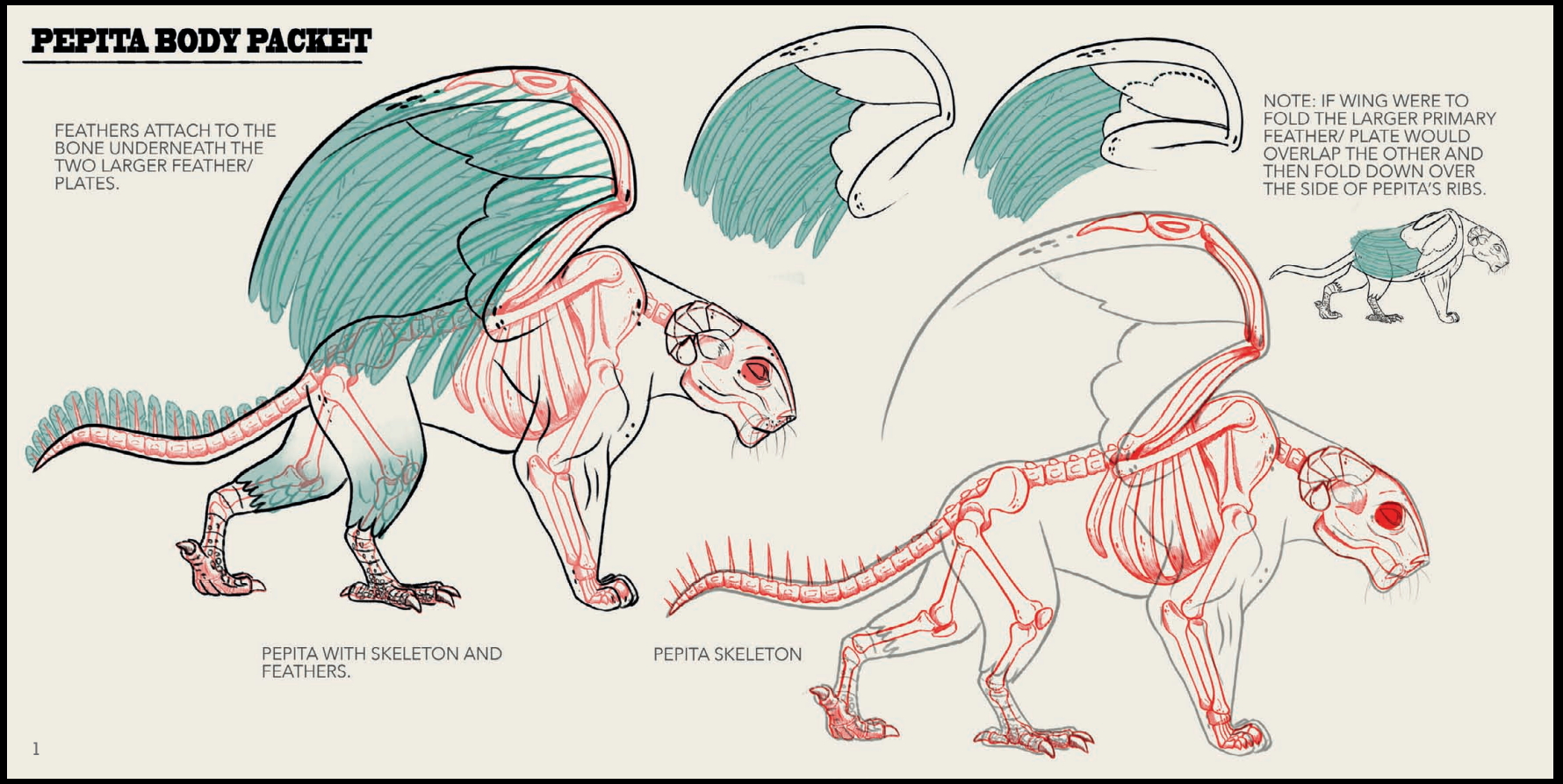
PEPITA

Alebrijes are colorful chimera animals, usually carved out of wood. They don't have any explicit connection to Día de los Muertos, but they are a very popular form of Mexican folk art that we wanted to embrace in the film. I actually have collected them ever since I was a kid living in Mexico, so when I found out they were going to be in this movie I was very excited; I brought my collection in for reference. Pepita is the one character I knew I had to work on. It was so much fun delving into big cat reference and bird wing anatomy, and thinking about her color patterning—all the way down to the wrinkles in her forehead!

ALONSO MARTINEZ

Character Modeling Artist

Huy Nguyen Digital



1 Daniel Arriaga Digital **2 Greg Dykstra** Clay

Daniel Arriaga Digital

Shelly Wan Digital

LOS ALEBRIJES

The fun challenge with the *alebrijes* was that they had to harken to their folk art roots, to the handcrafted look, but also feel plausible as living creatures. So their shapes are stylized, but they have feathers and scales, and their super-bright, saturated colors are bright in a bioluminescent way. It's always a little bit dim in the world of the dead, so it shows off that glowing quality really well. There's actually something about these creatures that reminds me of microbes and things under a microscope. To me, they add a life and a wonder and a magical element to the Land of the Dead.

BERT BERRY
Shading Art Director

MIGUEL'S DISGUISE

My son was just the right age to observe at the time I was working most intensely on Miguel. I watched him all the time—I'd look at his mannerisms as he ate a bowl of cereal. It wasn't about referencing his features; Miguel is definitely not a caricature of my son. It was more about trying to capture something that felt real, so that anyone would be able to relate to the character. I heard multiple people who came onto the film say Miguel looked like their son, or their cousin, or their nephew. That's the best compliment I can get as a character designer—to have someone tell me that a character I designed feels like somebody they know.

DANIEL ARRIAGA
Character Art Director

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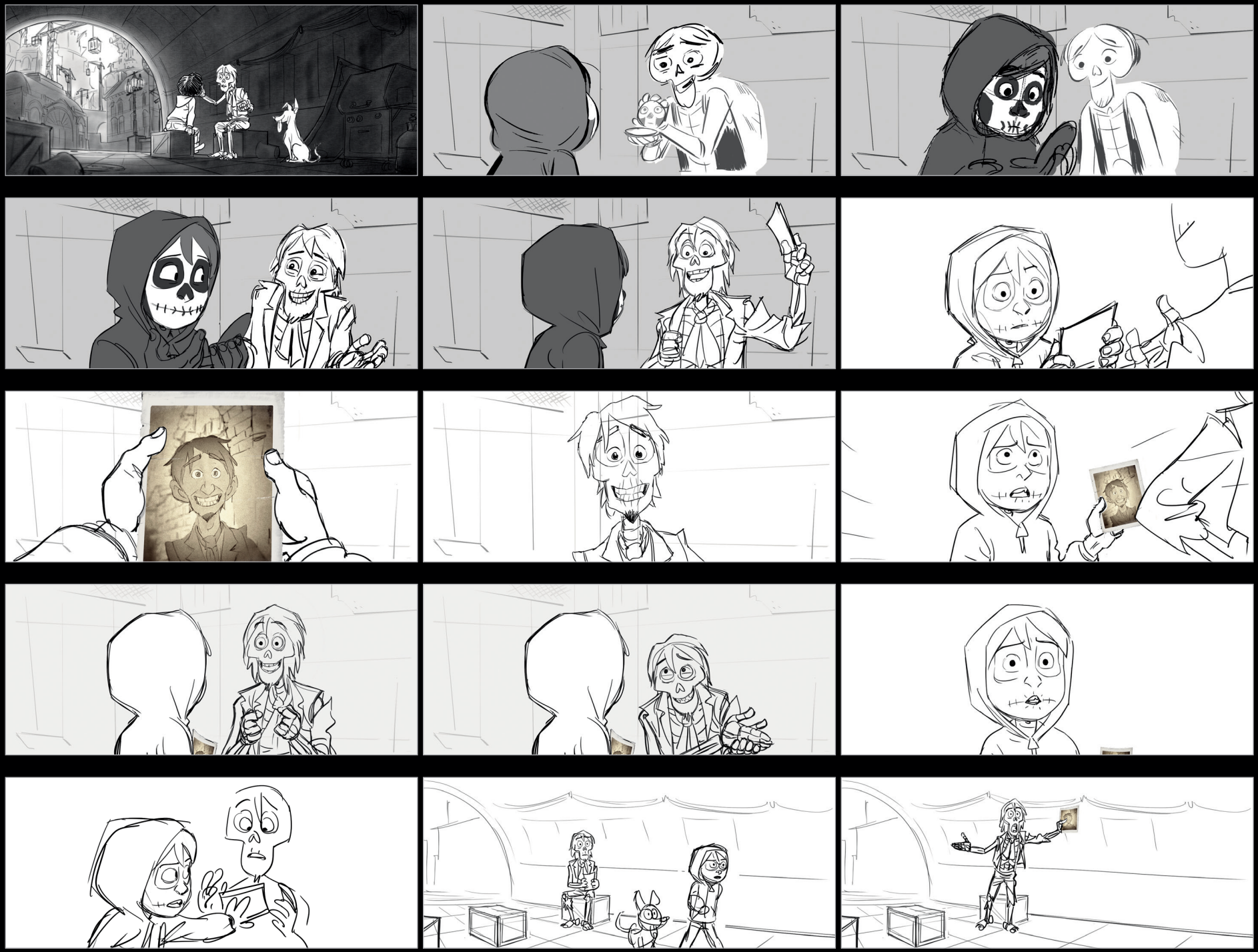
1 Daniel Arriaga Digital **2 Daniel Arriaga, Rona Liu** Digital **3–4 Daniel Arriaga** Photographs



Xavier Riffault, Octavio Rodriguez, Dean Kelly, Manny Hernandez, Tony Maki Digital

Sharon Calahan Digital

THE ARTS DISTRICT

I loved boarding the characters in the arts district. I went to a very artsy-fartsy school, so it was really fun to try to capture that general wackiness in the scene, that messiness of everyone doing their own thing all crowded together. I think it's a helpful scene to have in the movie, to show people who are dead but still enjoying the things that they loved in life, having a blast all the way into eternity. One of the details I threw in just for the heck of it was having Miguel walk past some skeletons doing nude life drawings. Since they're skeletons, they can be naked and it doesn't matter!

MADELINE SHARAFIAN
Story Artist

Tim Evatt Digital

Tim Evatt Digital

Shelly Wan, Layout by Xavier Riffault Digital

FRIDA

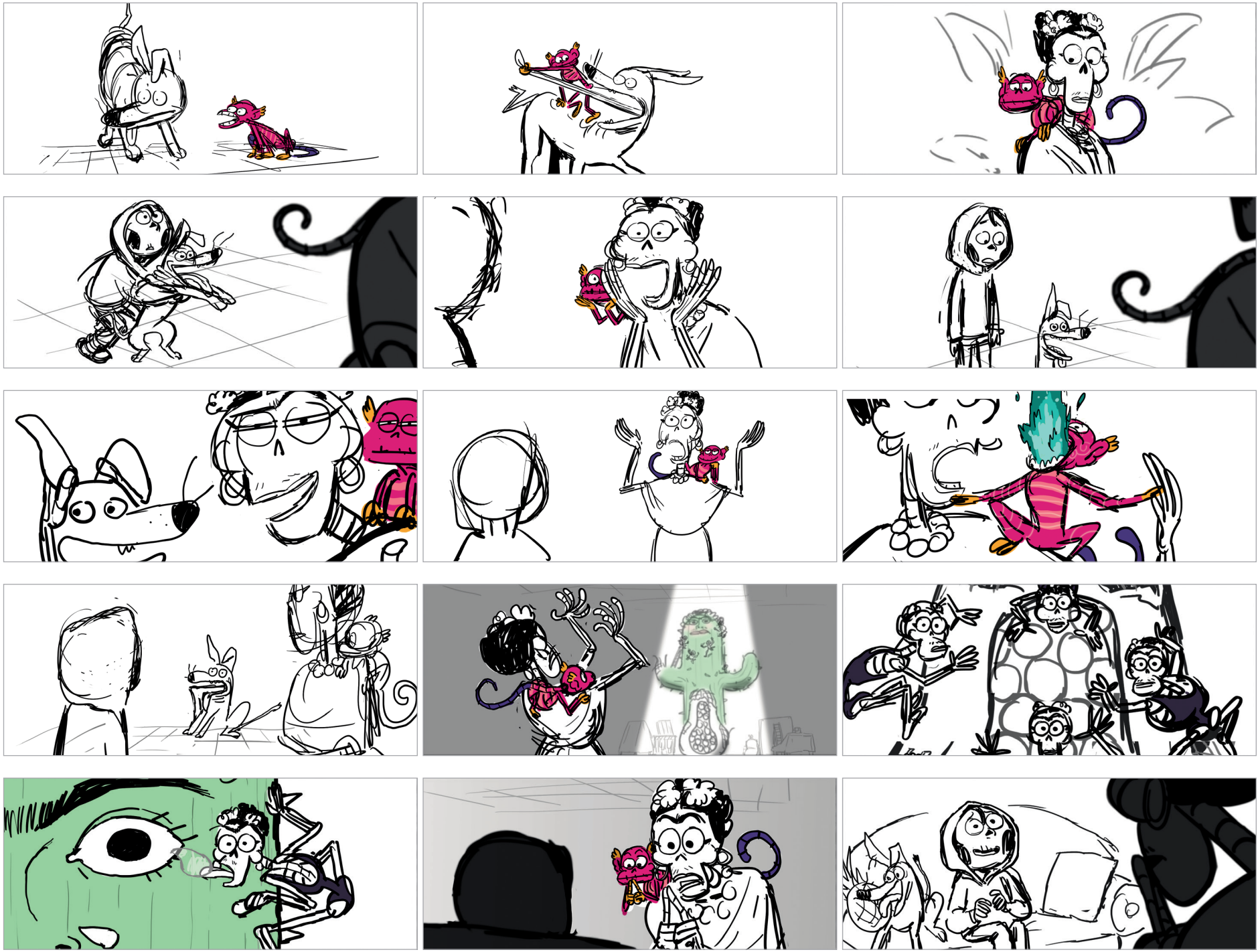
Even though *Coco* is a film that has a male protagonist and several male main characters, in a lot of ways, there's a strong matriarchal balance. Adrian and Lee and I wanted to make sure that the deep matriarchal female presence and strength that exists in Mexican culture is felt in all of its incarnations in our film, and Frida is one of those incarnations. She's such an important figure as an artist and as an ambassador of Mexican culture—the breadth of her imagination and intelligence and ability to express herself in all ways was just amazing.

DARLA K. ANDERSON
Producer

Frida is one of Miguel's first allies. Even before Hector becomes an ally to Miguel, Frida is the first person to tell him that he is a real artist, and for the first time he feels "oh, that might be true—and it's not just me who has this dream of being an artist." She was such a pioneer, so ahead of her time, and she overcame so much in her life that it gives an extra layer of significance to what her words mean to our character.

DANIELA STRIJLEVA
Character Artist

Daniela Strijleva Pen / Gouache



Madeline Sharafian Digital

Sharon Calahan Digital

THE FORGOTTEN ONES

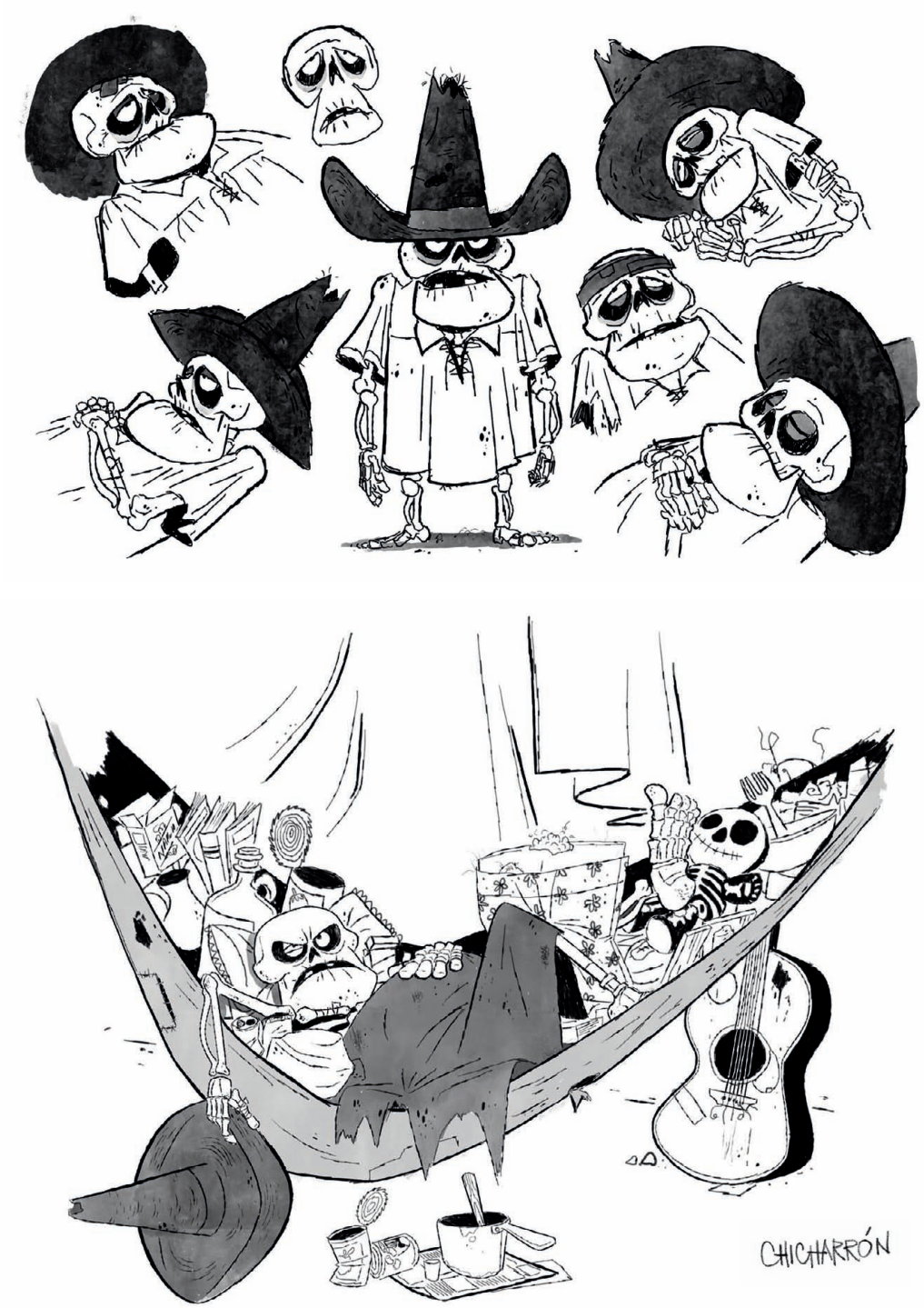
We knew that we wanted this scene to look and feel very different from anything we'd seen so far in the Land of the Dead. While the city streets and buildings we've seen elsewhere are more vertically oriented and beautifully lit and colored, this area has a subterranean feel and its layout is flat and disheveled. We used a lot of long lenses so that we could create an extra level of depth and clutter by shooting through soft focus, silhouetted foreground elements.

MATT ASPBURY
Director of Photography - Camera

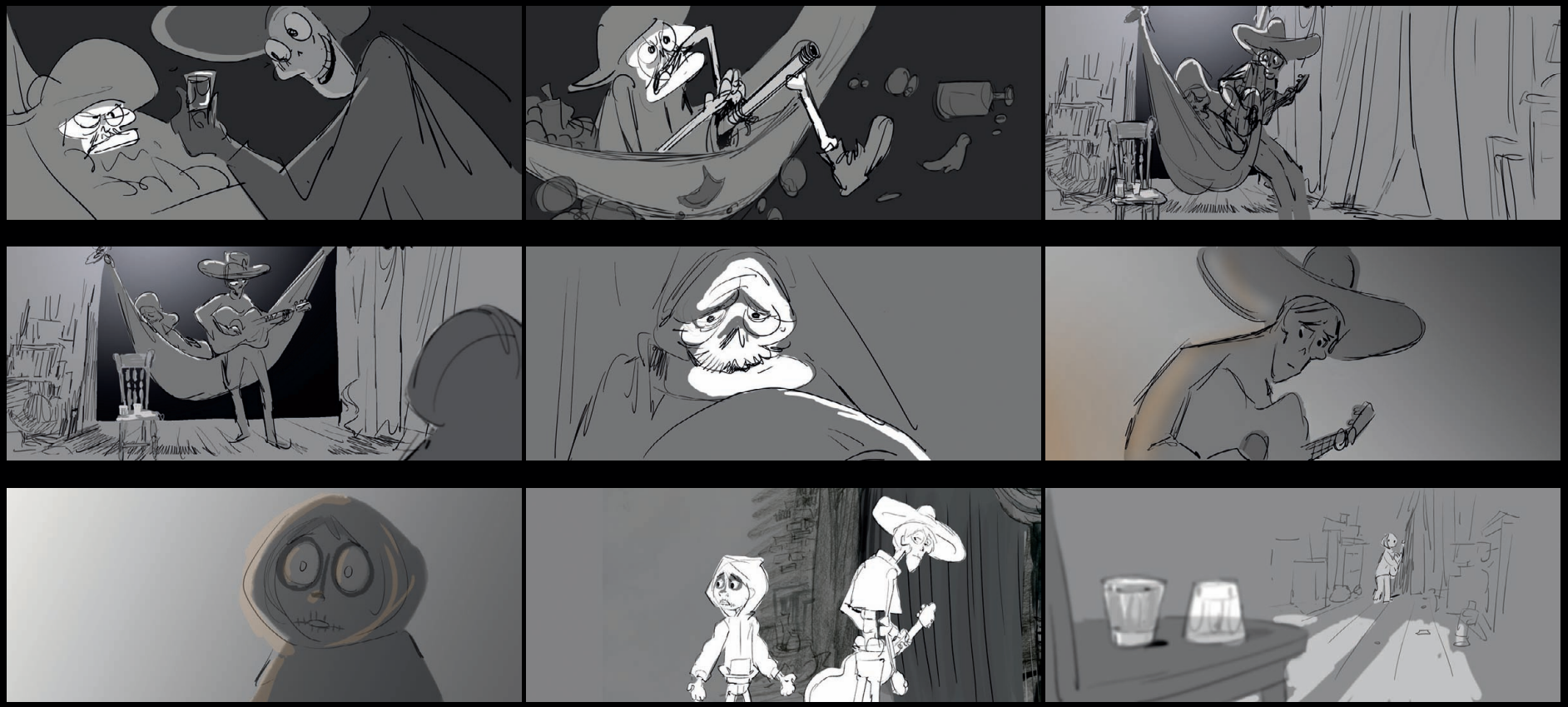
THE FINAL DEATH

In Mexico, we learned about a belief that each person has three deaths. The first is when you die, when you take your last breath. The second is when you're buried. And the third is when the last person on earth who remembered you dies, and you are no longer remembered by the living. That idea of a third and final death was incredibly powerful for us. Not only was it a beautiful idea, a poetic way of conceptualizing the connection between the living and the dead, it established that there could be material stakes for the residents of the Land of the Dead.

JASON KATZ
Story Supervisor



Daniel Arriaga Pen / Pencil / Digital



Ronnie Del Carmen, Dean Kelly, Jason Katz Digital

Ernesto Nemesio Digital

Ernesto Nemesio Digital

Layout Render, Matt Aspbury, Robert Kincaid Digital

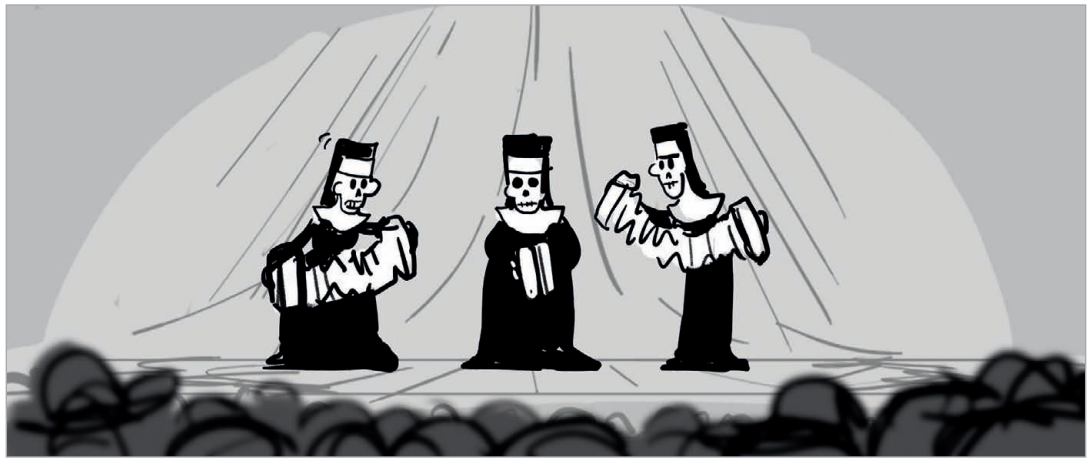
TALENT SHOW

The talent show was a particularly interesting challenge from a crowds perspective because not only did we have to worry about creating a large and varied audience, we also had to worry about all the performers and characters backstage. Pretty much all of the performers and crew were characters from our general background character pool who were reshaded and/or given new clothes or accessories. Some of the characters who needed something special, like performers who were very specific, or characters that really needed to punch home a gag, would get brand-new hairstyles or costumes. We were a little nervous about whether there would be enough variety, but animation helps tremendously—an animator can make the exact same character feel completely different by varying the facial expression and performance.

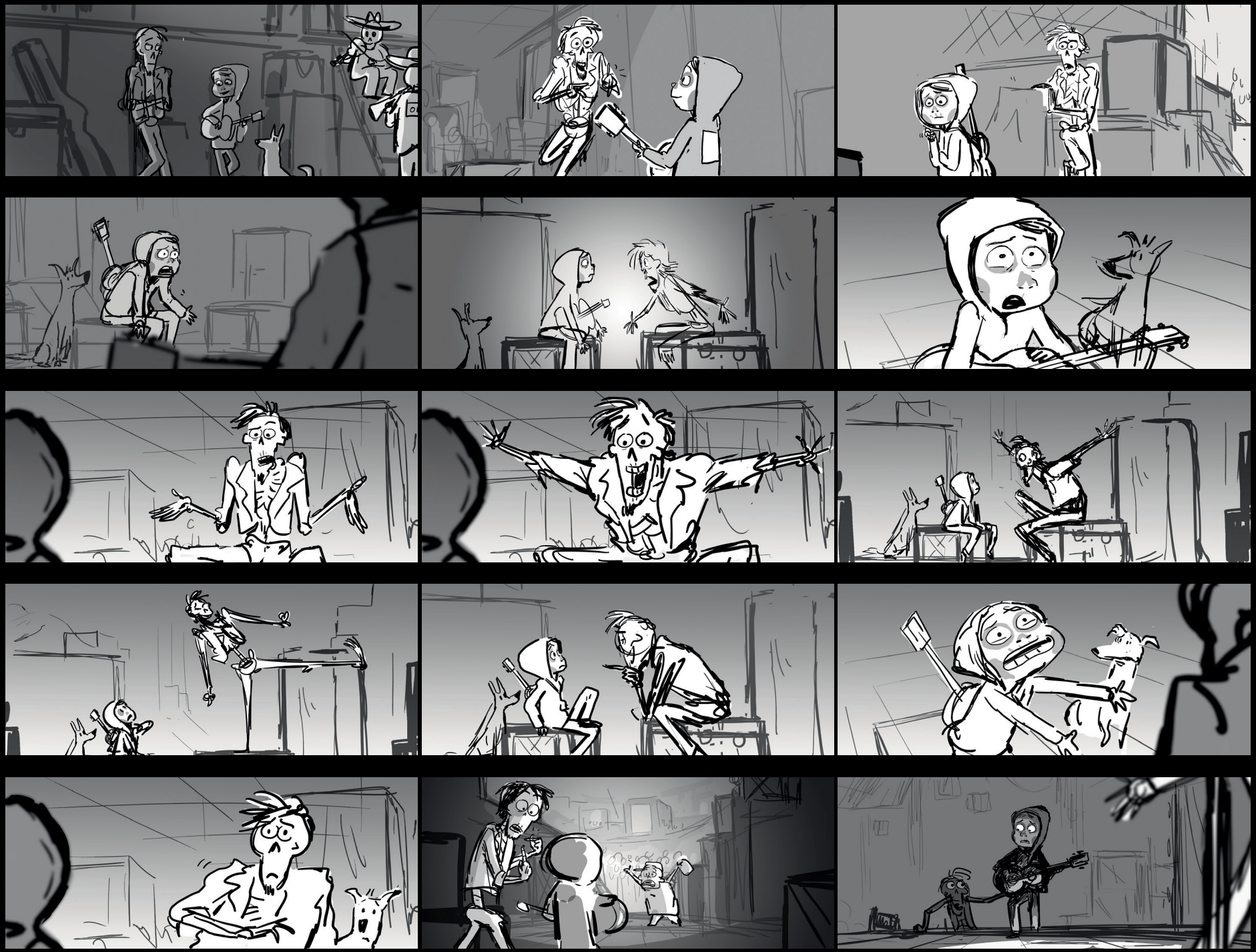
CHRISTIAN HOFFMAN
Character Supervisor

Tim Evatt Digital

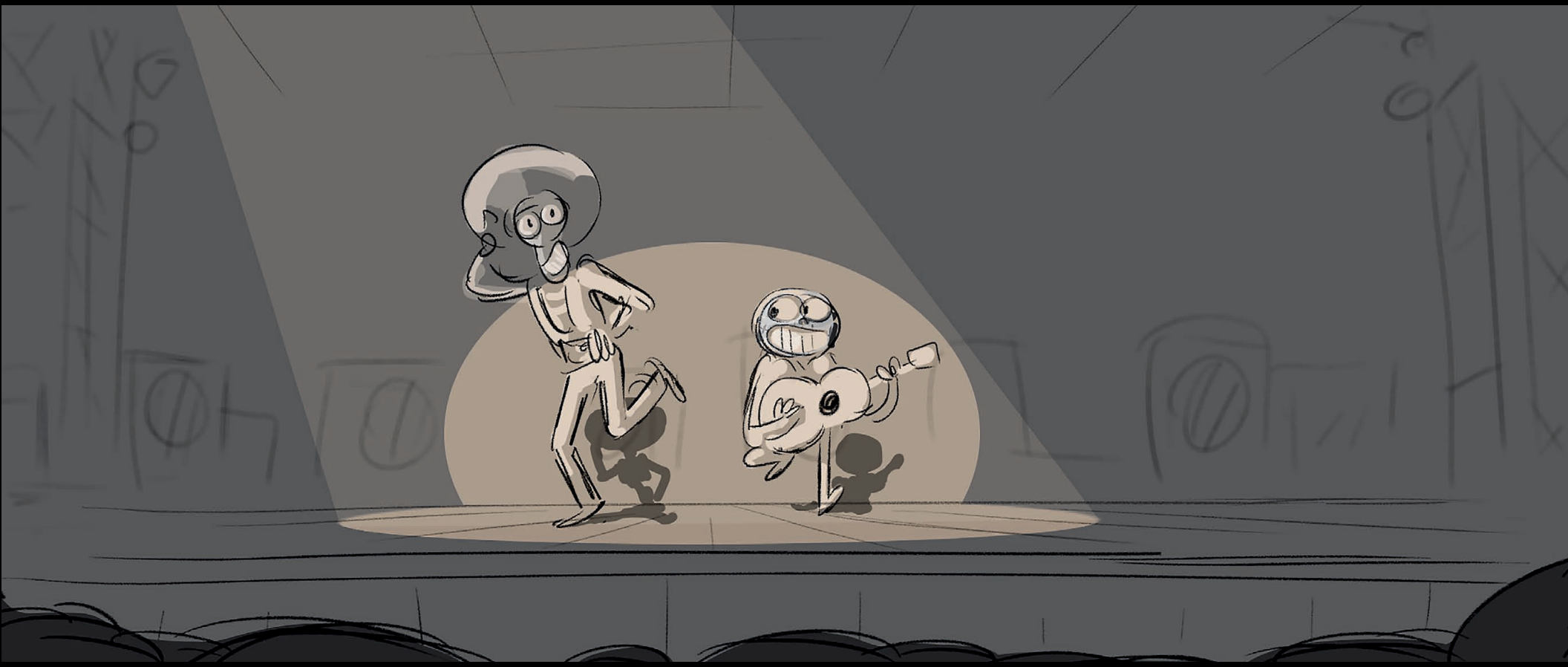
Daniel Arriaga Pen / Pencil / Digital



Trevor Jimenez Digital



Trevor Jimenez, Adrian Molina Digital



Gleb Sanchez-Lobashov Digital

Harley Jessup Digital

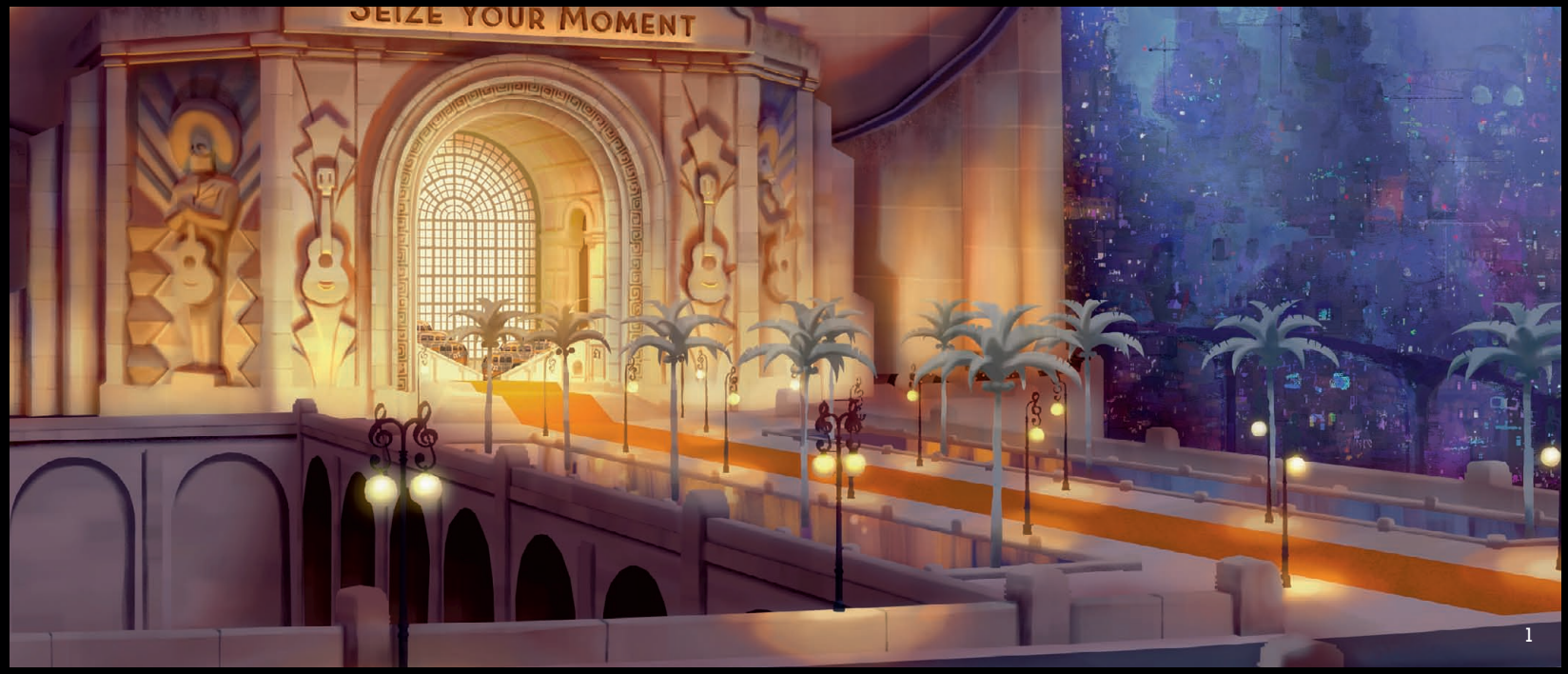
Harley Jessup, Layout by Dean Kelly Digital

DE LA CRUZ'S PARTY

Ernesto de la Cruz's mansion is the grandest home in the Land of the Dead. De la Cruz is from the golden age of Mexican cinema in the 1930s, when stars like Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, and María Félix were creating amazing screen performances. Everything about Ernesto de la Cruz is bigger than life (or bigger than death?), and his estate sits atop a huge art deco tower that is a monument to his musical fame. His ballroom, with its guitar-shaped pool, is an eclectic mix of Spanish colonial and art deco movie palace. The offerings from his devoted fans are arranged in towers, filling a vast room that is really one big *ofrenda* to himself.

HARLEY JESSUP
Production Designer

Tim Evatt Digital



1

2

1 Shelly Wan Digital **2 Huy Nguyen** Digital

Ernesto Nemesio Digital

Sharon Calahan Digital

Sharon Calahan Digital

Danielle Feinberg, Huy Nguyen Digital

Louis Thomas Digital

HISTORICAL FIGURES

We wanted to have iconic Mexican people at de la Cruz's party, to have characters some people would be able to recognize in the crowd. Many of these characters I knew growing up, because my grandma would watch Mexican TV all the time, and these characters were everywhere back then. It was really cool to be able to bring them back to life through animation; I know it'll be special for a lot of people.

DANIEL ARRIAGA

Character Art Director

Daniel Arriaga, Chris Sasaki Pen / Pencil / Digital

Pancho Villa

Ignacio Allende

SKELETAL DE LA CRUZ

Tony Fucile Digital

Jerome Ranft Clay

Bert Berry Digital

Trevor Jimenez, Gleb Sanchez-Lobashev, James Robertson, Tony Maki Digital

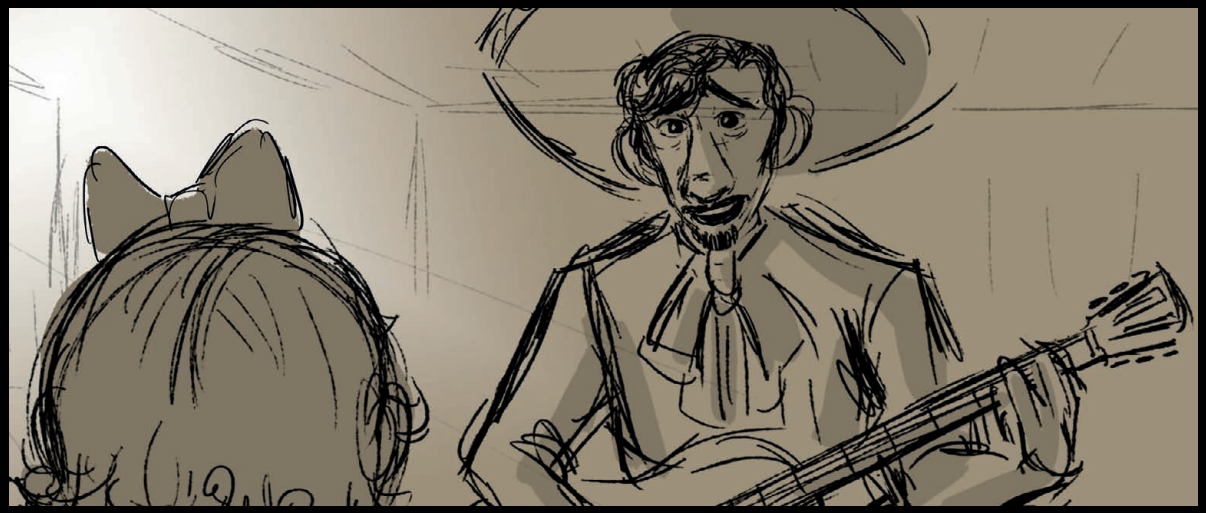
Sharon Calahan Digital

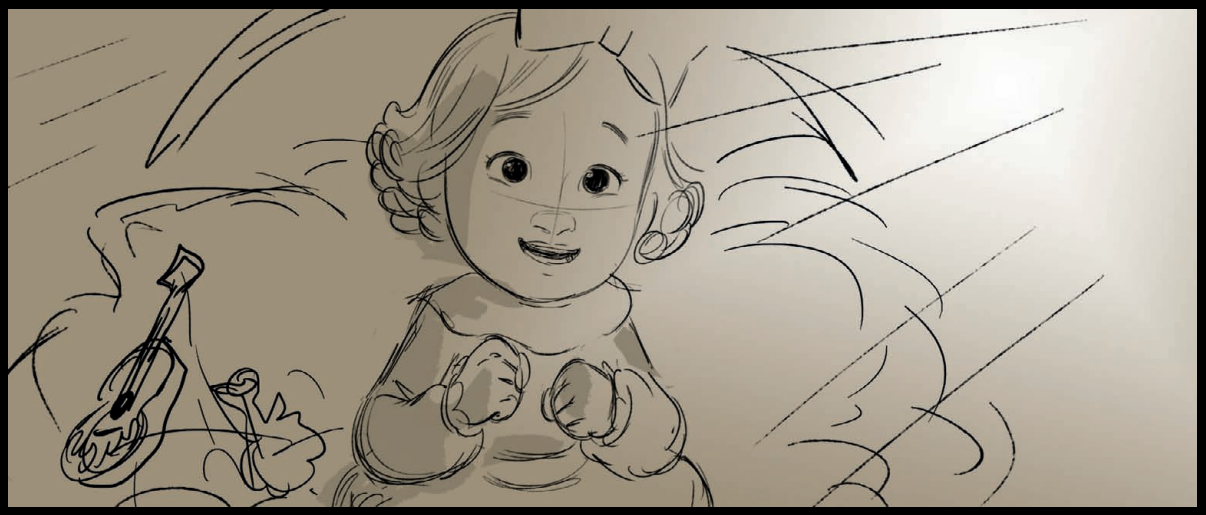
Sharon Calahan, Layout by Dean Kelly Digital

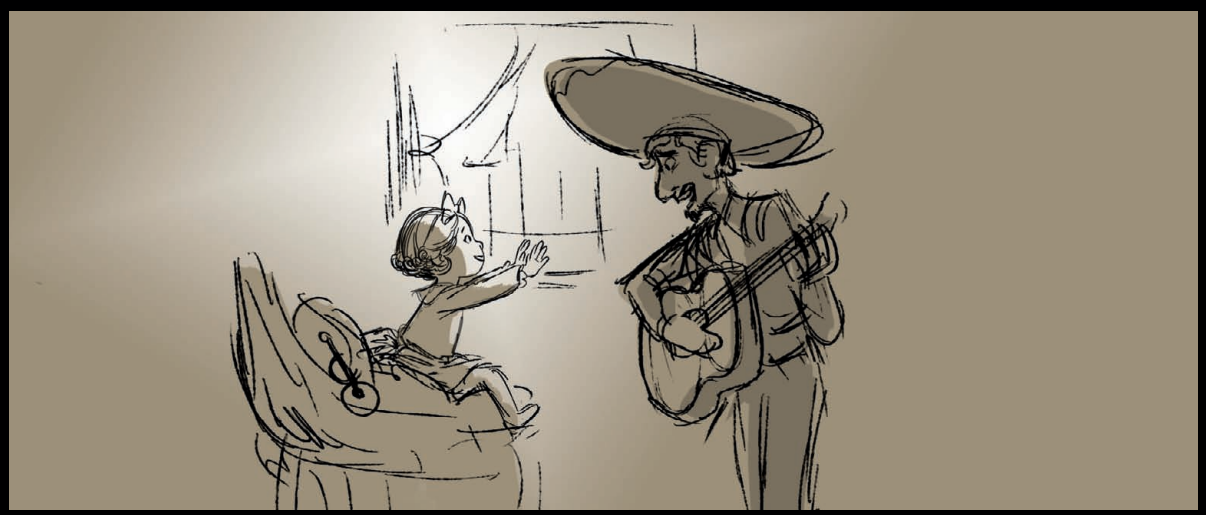
TRAPPED

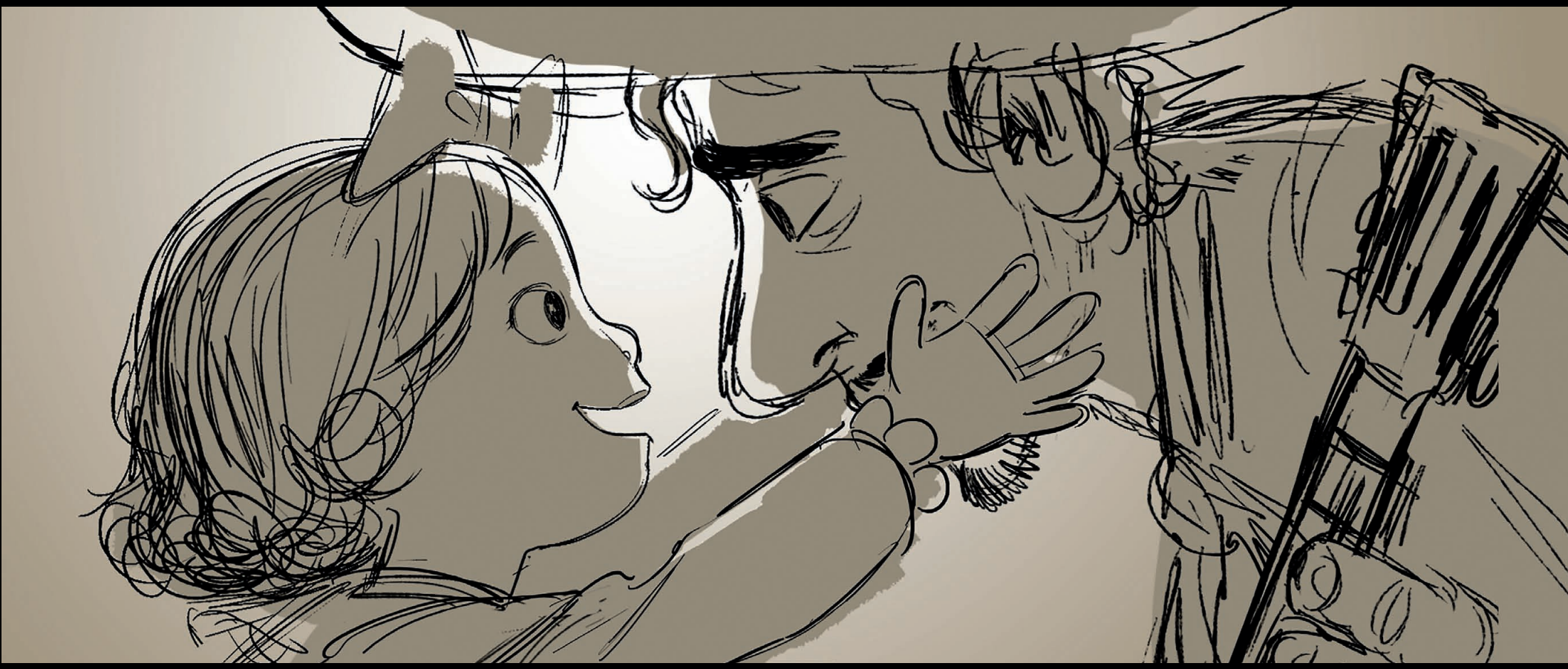
This scene is a rather unique one in the Land of the Dead because it's more about the light and atmosphere than it is about the color. There's some emotional intensity going on between Hector and Miguel; they're resolving conflict, so I wanted there to be a little bit of punch, some push-pull. Visually, I wanted to play the hardness of the high contrast against the softness of the atmosphere. I didn't want things to get too monochrome, so there's a delicate color complexity from the soft, cool light interacting with the blue-green water. I really wanted to make sure that that glow and softness came through while still having the harsher contrast elements to add some tension back in.

SHARON CALAHAN
Visual Design

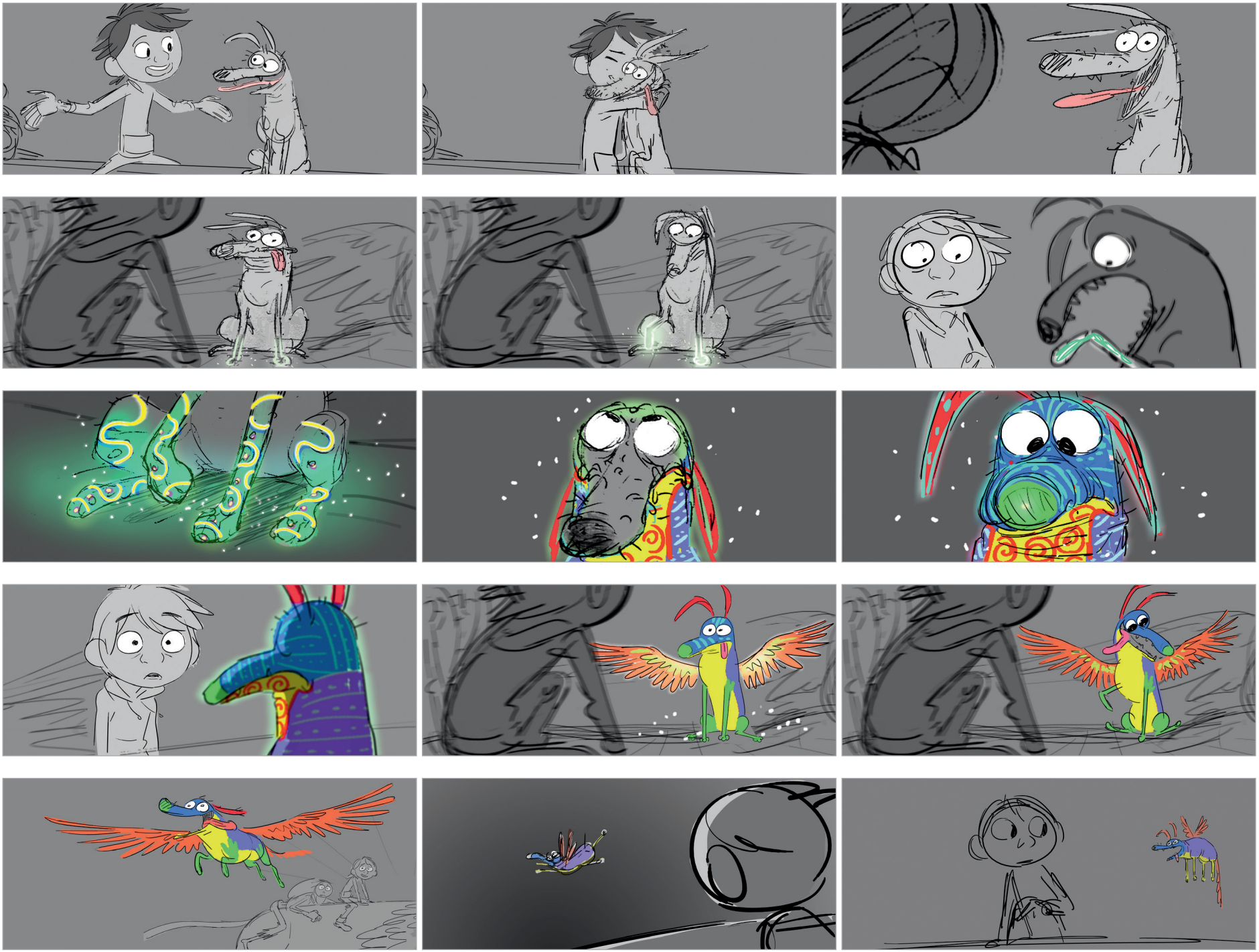




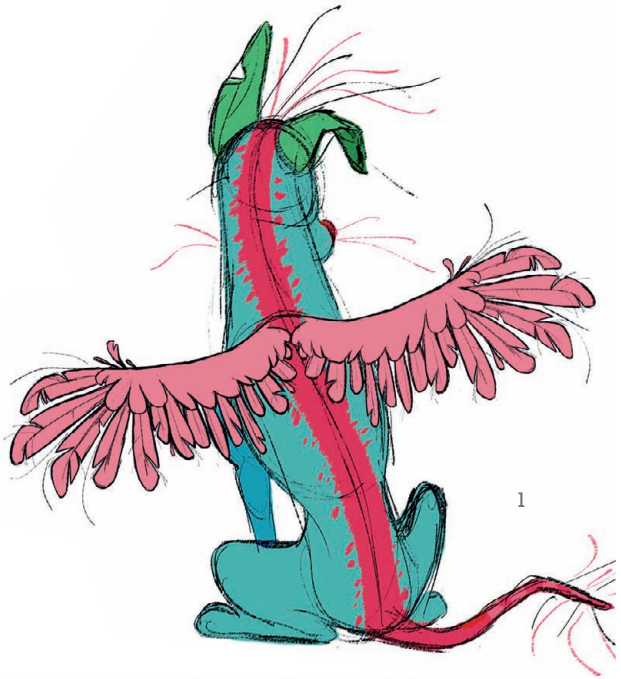




Manny Hernandez, Rosana Sullivan Digital



Rosana Sullivan Digital



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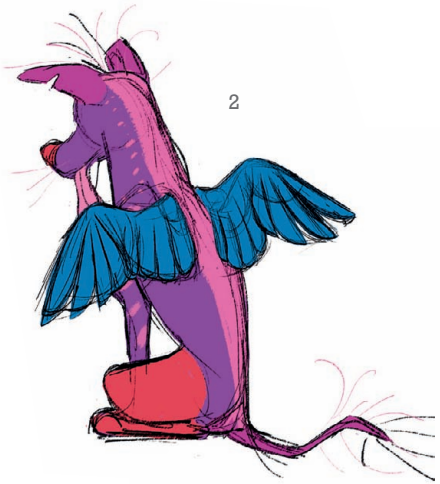

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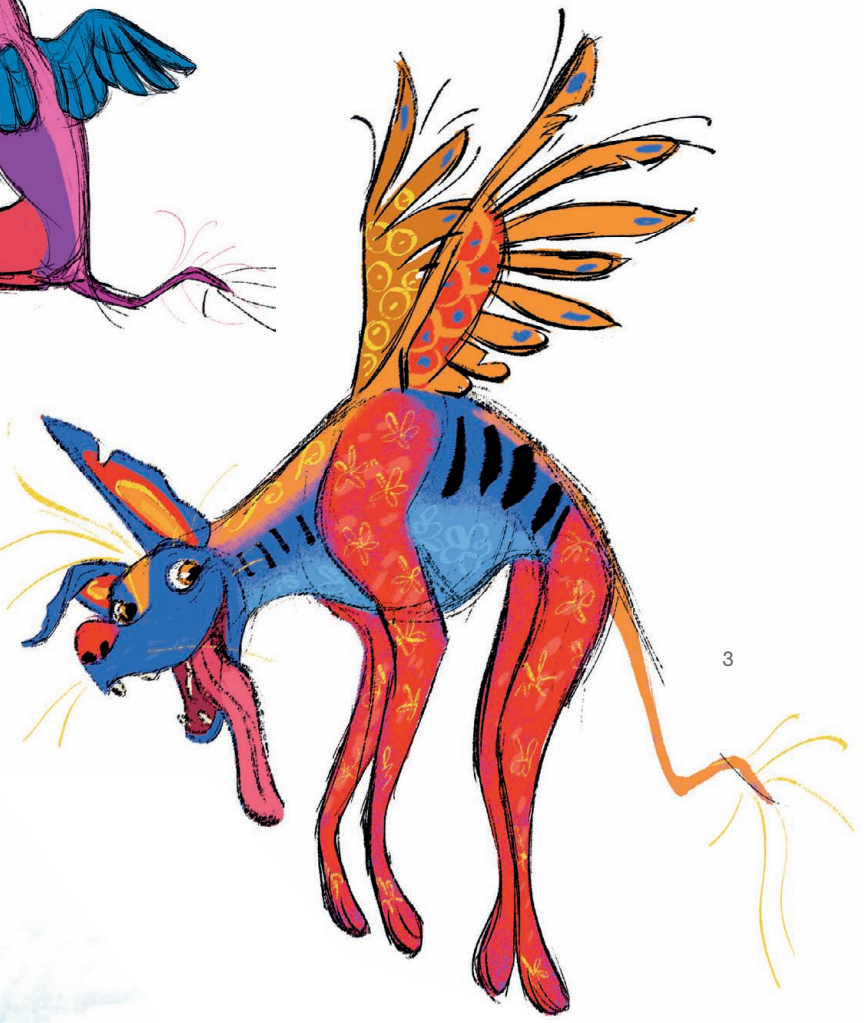

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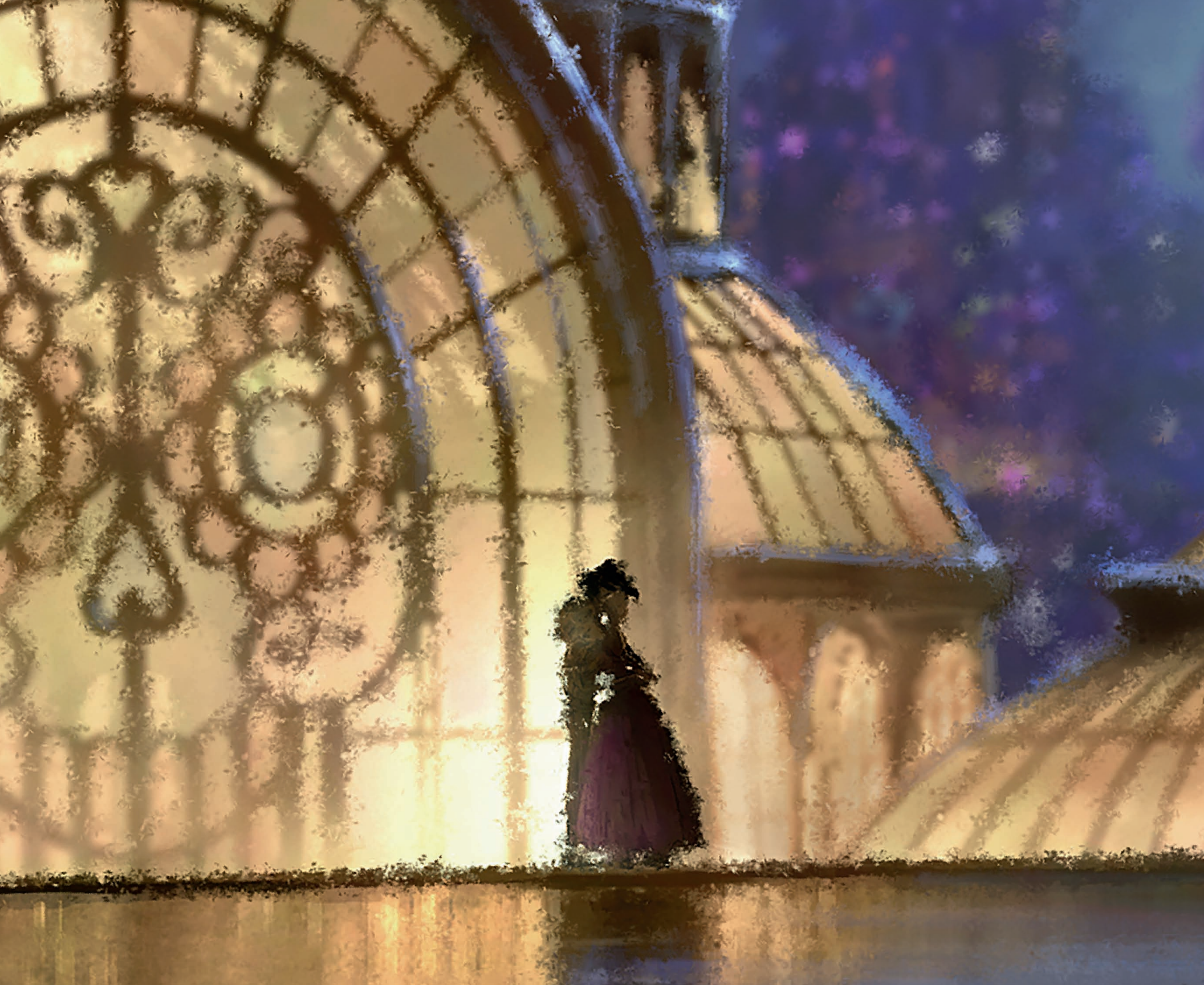
DANTE ALEBRIJE

1–3 Zaruhi Galstyan Digital
4 Ana Ramírez Watercolor / Charcoal / Pen

Shelly Wan Digital

Sharon Calahan Digital



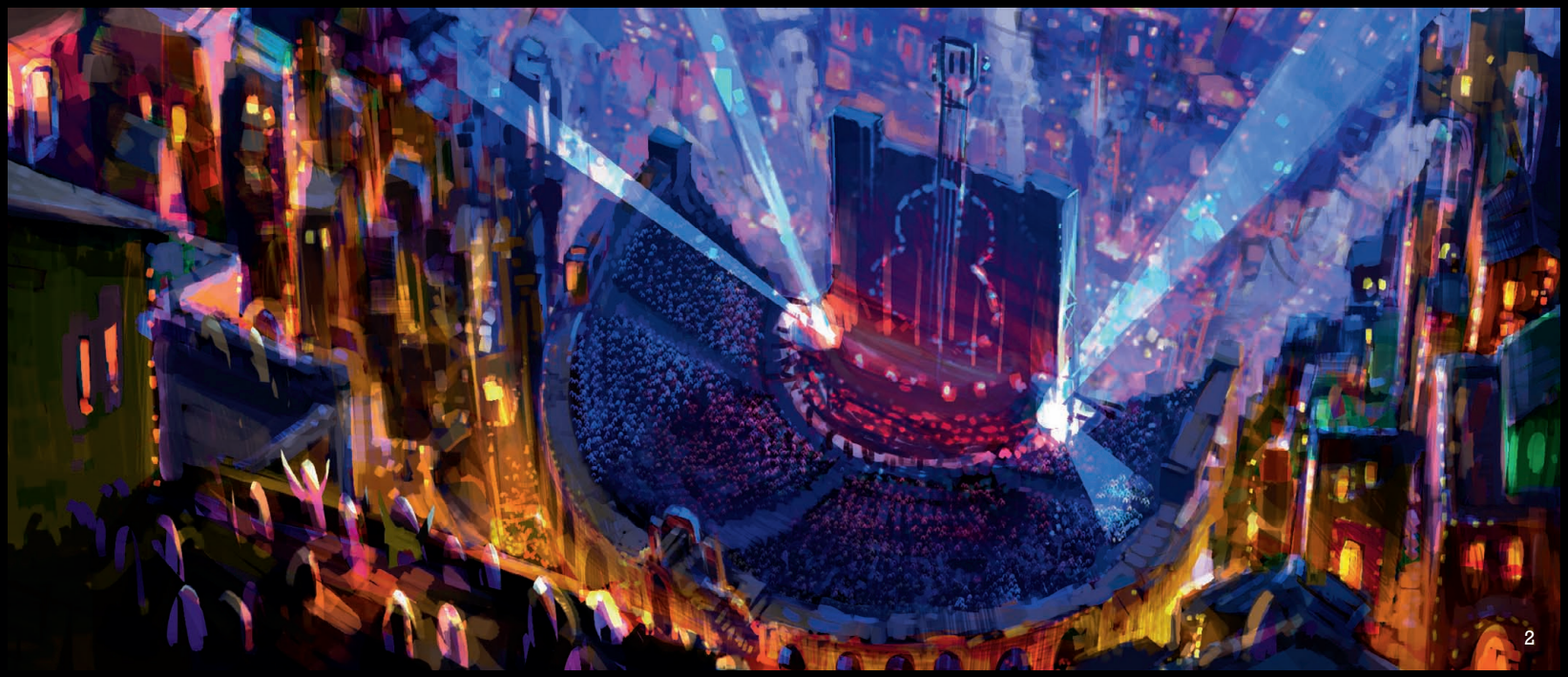
SUNRISE SPECTACULAR

The story went through many changes, but every incarnation always seemed to end with a big performance at a huge arena in the Land of the Dead. Some early versions had Miguel performing, but in the version we finally landed on, that duty fell to Mamá Imelda, which felt more satisfying. The Land of the Dead isn't built around de la Cruz, but he's such an important figure that he needed his own special venue for his Sunrise Spectacular. One of our early touchstones was the Juarez Theater in Guanajuato. We took that Victorian aesthetic and combined it with elements of Aztec architecture and ancient Meso-American design motifs to create the final stadium where the Sunrise Spectacular takes place.

LEE UNKRICH

Director

1 Harley Jessup Digital **2 Huy Nguyen** Digital **3 Shelly Wan, Paul Conrad** Digital



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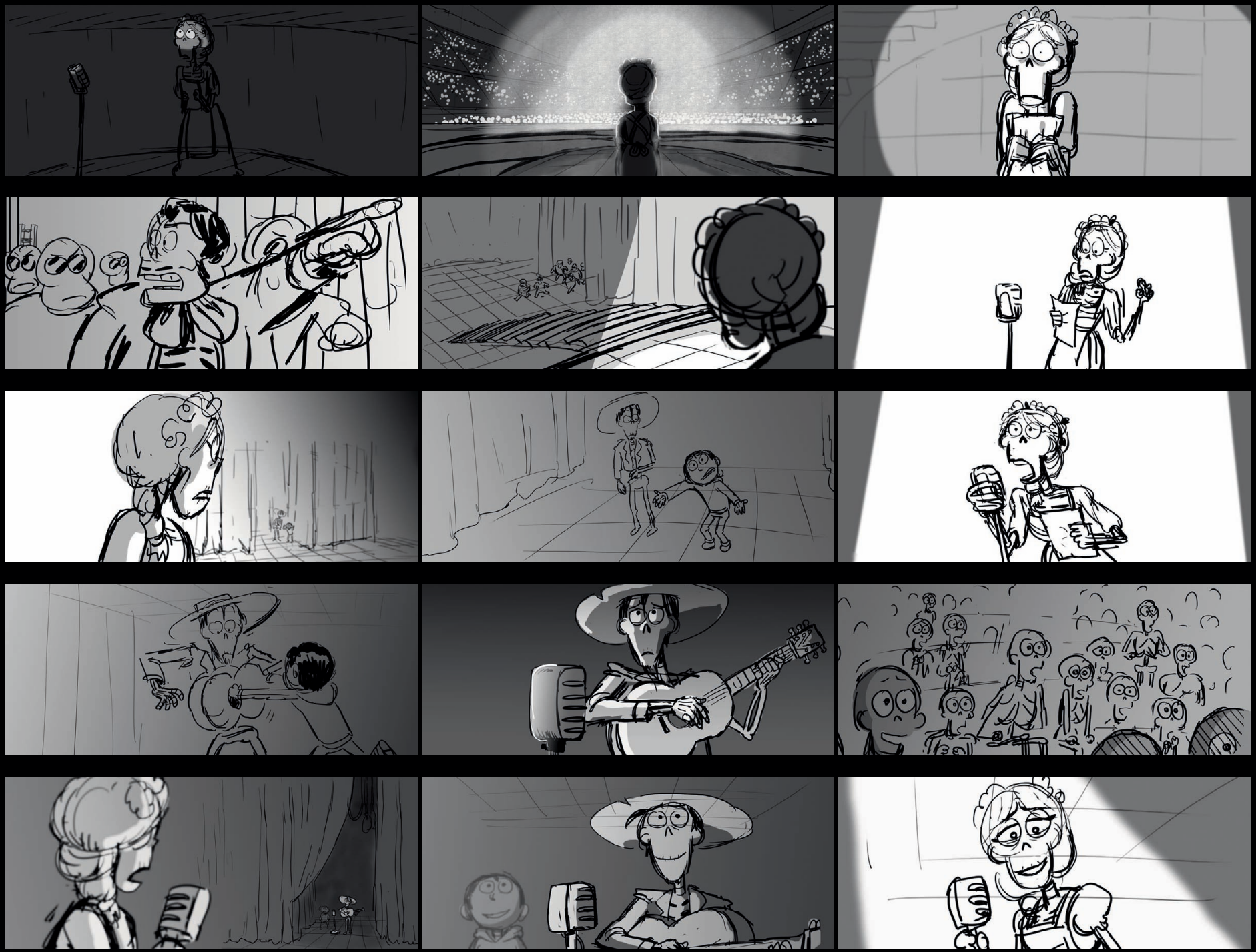


Madeline Sharafian Digital

Sharon Calahan, Layout by Xavier Riffault Digital

Huy Nguyen, Layout by Madeline Sharafian Digital

Sharon Calahan, Layout by Dean Kelly Digital

SONG FOR COCO

We always knew we wanted to end the film with a moment that married music with memory; it felt like the only way we could make Miguel's journey complete. We had a notion that Miguel had to play music in front of his family, that he had to perform in a way that could change their minds. And we knew it had to connect with Coco, who was the bridge between Miguel's living family and the family he meets in the Land of the Dead. We were doing research on music and memory when we discovered a documentary on the incredible effect music can have for people with dementia. When we saw a clip of an elderly man deeply affected by dementia briefly brought back to life by music from his past, we were all floored. That was the final piece that connected the dots and made us confident that this was the right way to resolve the story.

JASON KATZ
Story Supervisor

Daisuke Tsutsumi Digital

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Darla K. Anderson, Producer

Thank you first and foremost to the people of Mexico. We are particularly indebted to the many individuals throughout the states of Oaxaca, Guanajuato, and Michoacán, and in the great metropolis of Mexico City, who welcomed us so warmly, shared with us so generously, and taught us so much. Thank you to everyone who helped make our trips such memorable experiences, especially Denise Muñoz and Juan Carlos Cedeño.

We wouldn't have made this film without the unwavering passion of our director, Lee Unkrich. We were all grateful to work on such an awe-inspiring film with Lee at the helm. Thank you also to Adrian Molina, our co-director, who shined a light on this journey by writing from his heart, both in script and song, weaving beautiful details that inspired the story and art departments.

Thank you to our incredible, indefatigable production designer Harley Jessup—a true force of nature—and to our amazing art department, for giving dazzling form to the characters and world of *Coco*: artists Grant Alexander, Daniel Arriaga, Matt Aspbury, Bert Berry, Sharon Calahan, Greg Dykstra, Tim Evatt, Tony Fucile, Zaruhi Galstyan, Tom Gately, Jenna Huerta, Bryn Imagire, Robert Kondo, Rona Liu, Nat McLaughlin, Jason Merck, Ernesto Nemesio, John Nevarez, Huy Nguyen, Ana Ramírez, Jerome Ranft, Daniela Strijleva, Dice Tsutsumi, and Shelly Wan; art interns Brandon Coates, Sophie Crowley, Drew Hartel, Caleb Heisey, Luisa Leal, Lydia Nichols, Liam Rinat, Travis Ruiz, Sona Sargsyan, De'Von Stubblefield, and Louis Thomas; art manager Piper Freeman, and art prod staff Megan Alderson, Celeste Baird, Courtney Casper Kent, Kelly LaMar, and Jeanette McKillop.

Thank you to our unstoppable story supervisor, Jason Katz, for devoting his prodigious talents to the love and care of *Coco,* and to our fantastic story team, whose extraordinary work brought this film to life: writer Matt Aldrich; story artists Jim Capobianco, Enrico Casarosa, Ronnie Del Carmen, Louis Gonzales, Manny Hernandez, Sam Hood, Andy Jimenez, Trevor Jimenez, Dean Kelly, Vlad Kooperman, Tony Maki, Xavier Riffault, James Robertson, Octavio Rodriguez, Gleb Sanchez-Lobashov, Madeline Sharafian, Nate Stanton, and Rosana Sullivan; story manager Mike Capbarat, and story production staff Kyle McDaniel, Mark Milla, and Tim Power.

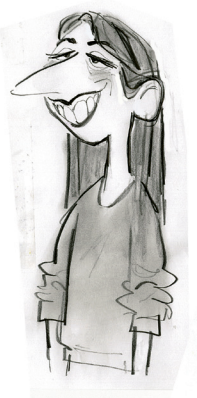
Thank you to director of photography Danielle Feinberg for leading, shepherding, and inspiring our gorgeous color script.

Thank you to the folks whose hard work made *The Art of Coco* possible: Melissa Bernabei, Lia Brown, Deborah Cichocki, Serena Dettman, Neil Egan, Molly Jones, Shannon Nicosia, Karen Paik, Wynn Rankin, Jessi Rymill, Jenny Moussa Spring, Beth Steiner, Shiho Tilley, Pippa White, and Margo Zimmerman.

Thank you to the entire *Coco* crew for putting your hearts and souls into this film, and to the production team who somehow managed to get everyone's hard work onto the screen: Mary Alice Drumm, David Park, David Ryu, Krissy Ober, and Alexandra Ivker. Thank you to our cultural consultants Marcela Davison Avilés, Lalo Alcaraz, and Octavio Solis for sharing their expertise and insight; to Mary Coleman, Grace Thompson, and the rest of the development team for getting us off to such a great start; and to casting, particularly Natalie Lyon, for helping us assemble our fantastic cast.

Special thanks to John Lasseter, Ed Catmull, Jim Morris, Marc Greenberg, Jim Kennedy, Steve May, Lori McAdams, and Tom Porter for their heartfelt encouragement of this project, for supporting our deep dive and research trips to Mexico, and for making Pixar such a great place to work.

Finally, thank you to all of the artists, technical artists, and the many teams that make up the community of Pixar. Your enthusiasm, collaboration, and support for *Coco* have buoyed us on the long journey of making the film, and we are truly grateful.



(Left to right, starting at top) **Bryn Imagire** by Grant Alexander, **Piper Freeman** by Rona Liu, **Adrian Molina** by Trevor Jimenez, **Jeanette McKillop** by Rona Liu, **Liam Rinat** by Rona Liu, **Daniel Arriaga** by Grant Alexander, **Courtney Kent** by Paul Conrad, **Louis Gonzalez** by Dean Kelly, **Jason Katz** by Rona Liu, **Harley Jessup** by Teddy Newton, **Greg Dykstra** by Rona Liu, **Kelly LaMar** by Rona Liu, **Octavio Rodriguez** by Dean Kelly, **Tim Evatt** by Rona Liu, **Zaruhi Galstyan** by Rona Liu, **Dean Kelly** by Daniel Arriaga, **De'Von Stubblefield** by Rona Liu, **Nathaniel McLaughlin** by Grant Alexander, **Megan Alderson** by Rona Liu, **Huy Nguyen** by Grant Alexander, **Ana Ramírez** by Rona Liu, **Daniela Strijleva** by Grant Alexander, **Grant Alexander** by Rona Liu, **Jenna Huerta** by Rona Liu, **Bert Berry** by Rona Liu, **Shelly Wan** by Rona Liu, **Darla Anderson** by Dean Kelly, **Lee Unkrich** by Jason Katz
Pencil / Pen

Ana Ramírez
Pencil / Watercolor / Digital

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

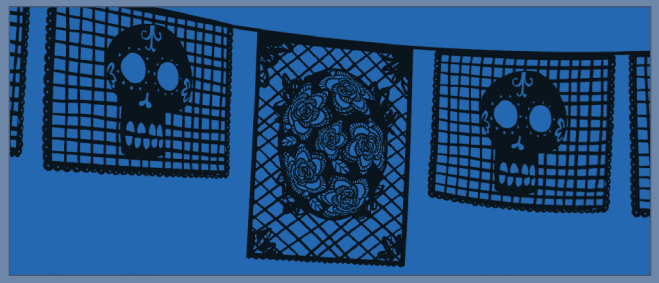
John Lasseter is a two-time Academy Award® winner, director, chief creative officer at Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios, and principal creative officer at Walt Disney Imagineering. He directed *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, *Cars*, and *Cars 2*.

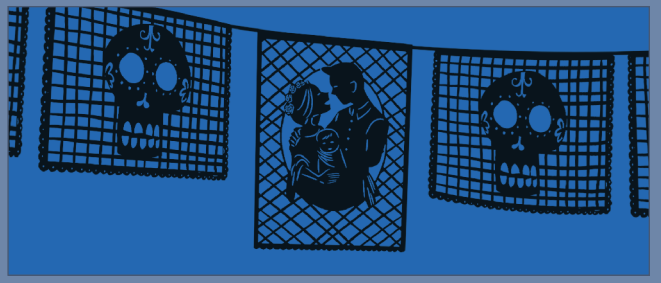
Lee Unkrich is the director of *Coco*. Unkrich joined Pixar in 1994, and has played a variety of key creative roles in nearly every animated feature film since his arrival, including executive producer of *The Good Dinosaur*, co-director of *Finding Nemo*, *Monsters, Inc.*, and *Toy Story 2*, and director of the Academy Award®-winning *Toy Story 3*.

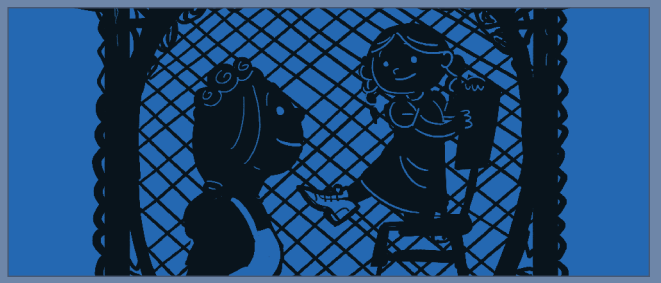
Adrian Molina is the co-director and writer of *Coco*. He began at Pixar as a story intern in the summer of 2006. Since joining the studio full-time that fall, Molina has worked on the Academy Award®-winning feature films *Ratatouille* and *Toy Story 3*, and was a story artist for *Monsters University*.

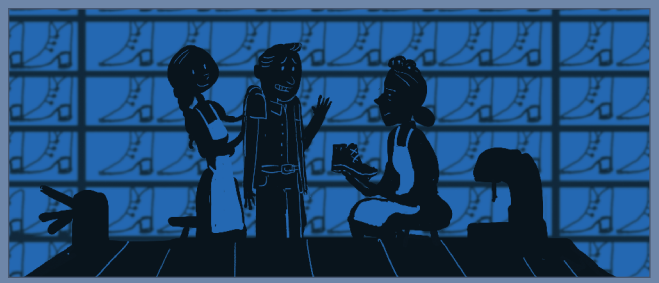
Daniel Arriaga, Pencil

COCO

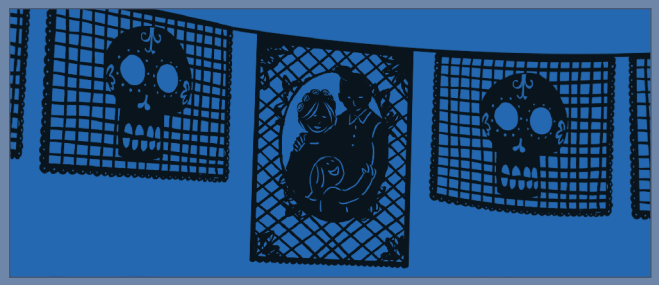


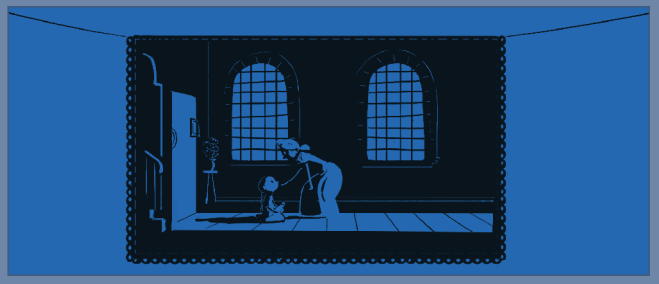
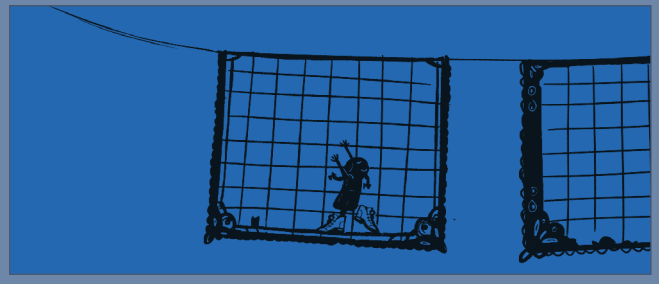
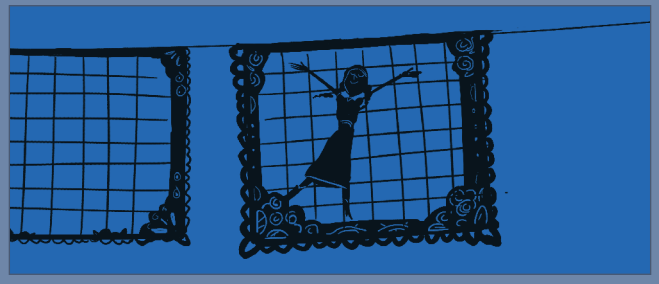
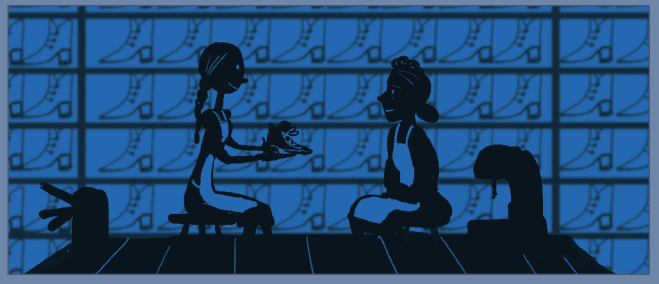


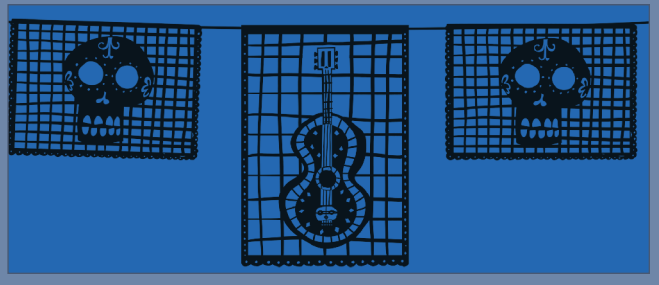


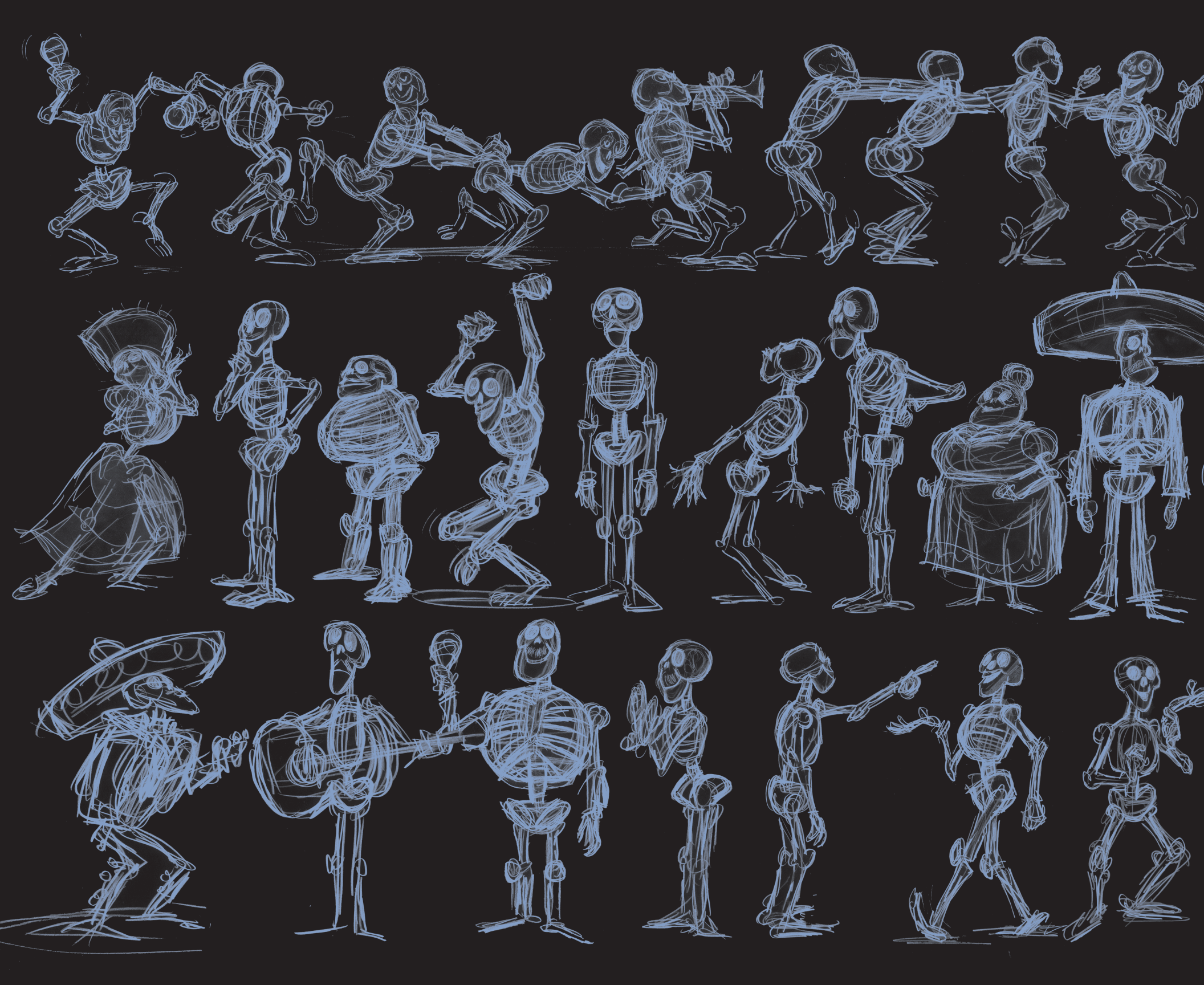


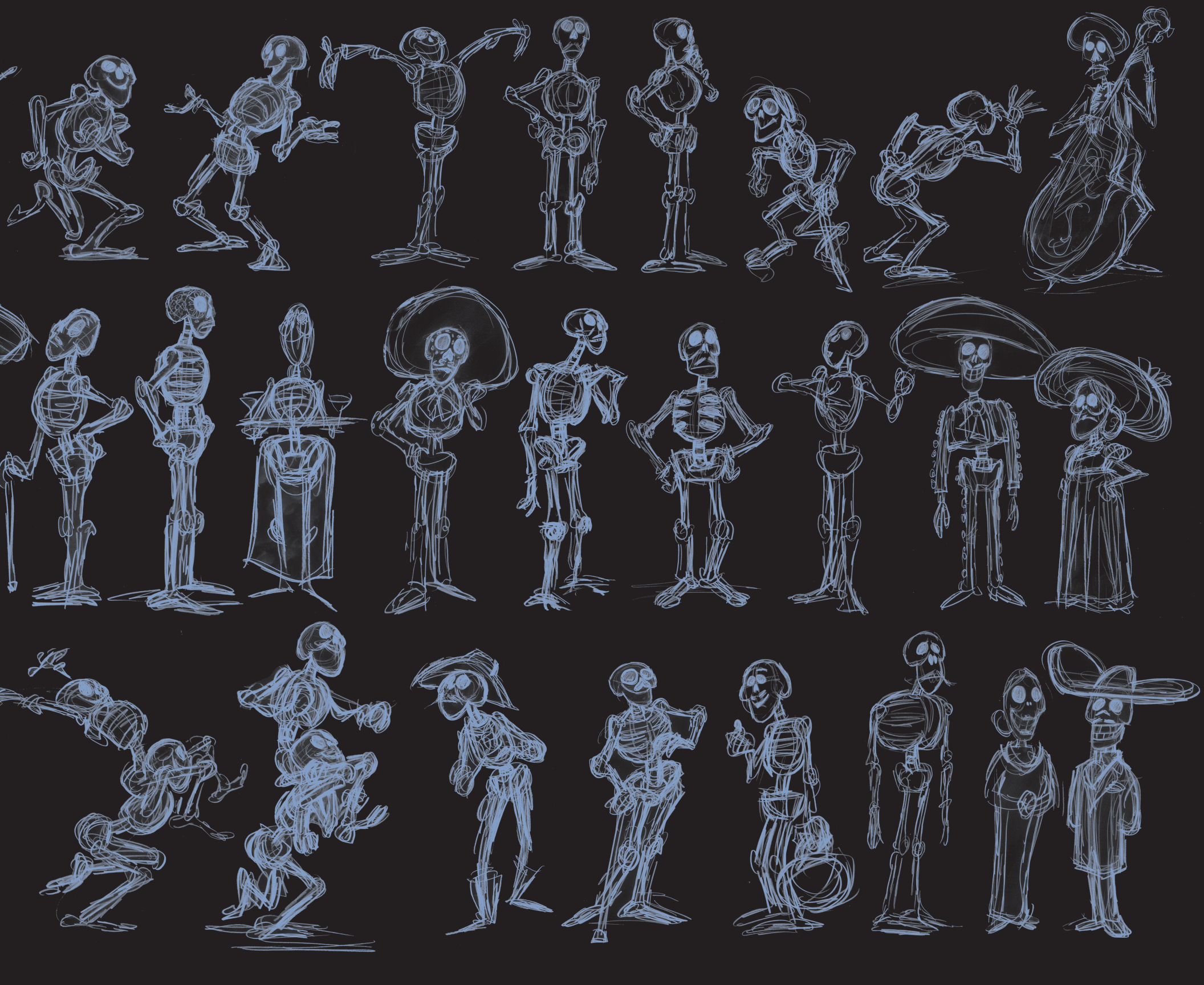
RIVERA
FAMILY
SHOEMAKERS

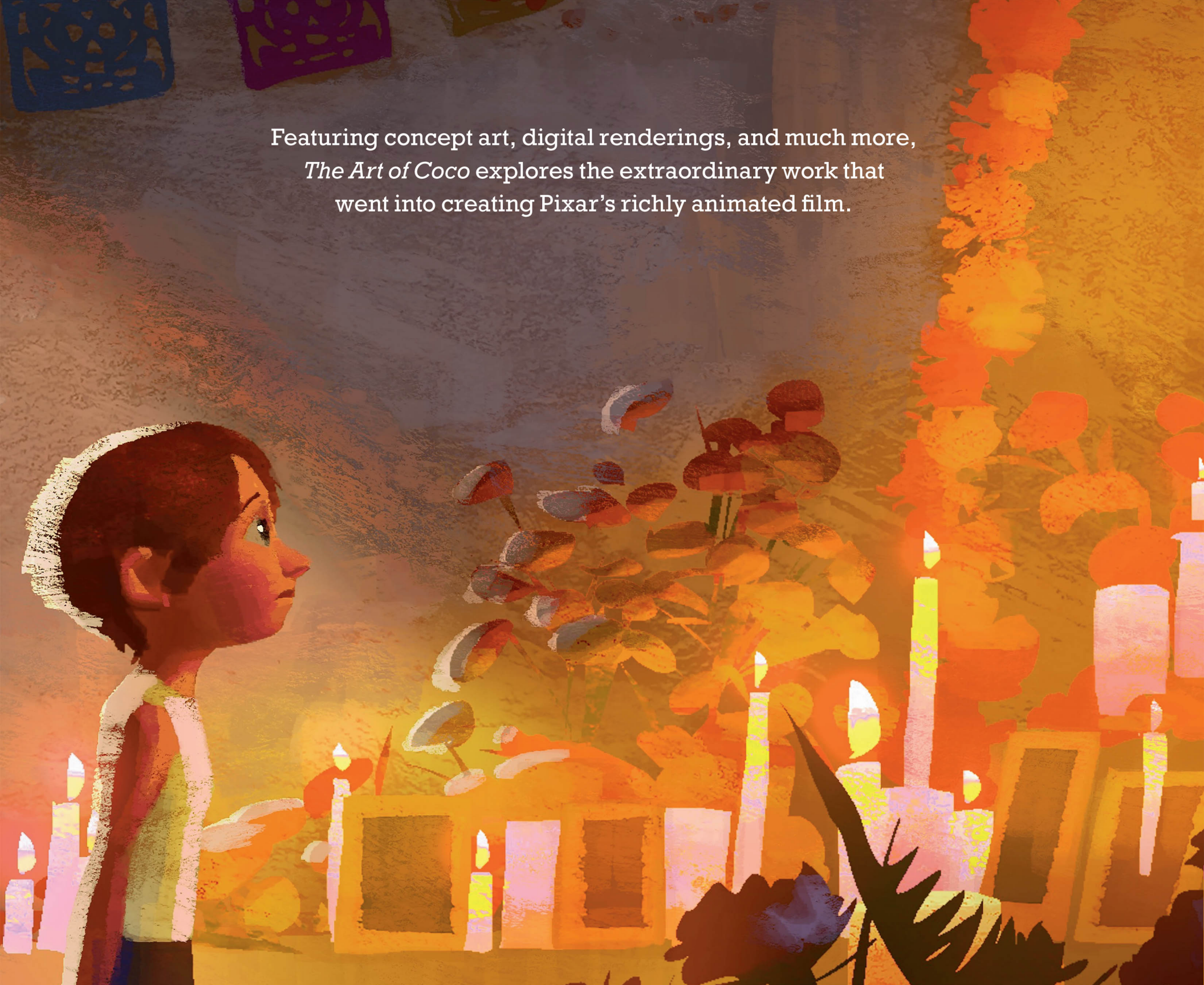










Featuring concept art, digital renderings, and much more, *The Art of Coco* explores the extraordinary work that went into creating Pixar's richly animated film.

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